Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-THREE • NUMBER THREE • MARCH 1987

Modern Ideologies & the Jews
Alain Besançon

The Schlesinger Thesis
Kenneth S. Lynn

Beyond Abstract Art?
Roger Kimball

Young People -A Story
Allegra Goodman

The Curious Case of Marek Edelman
Lucy S. Dawidowicz

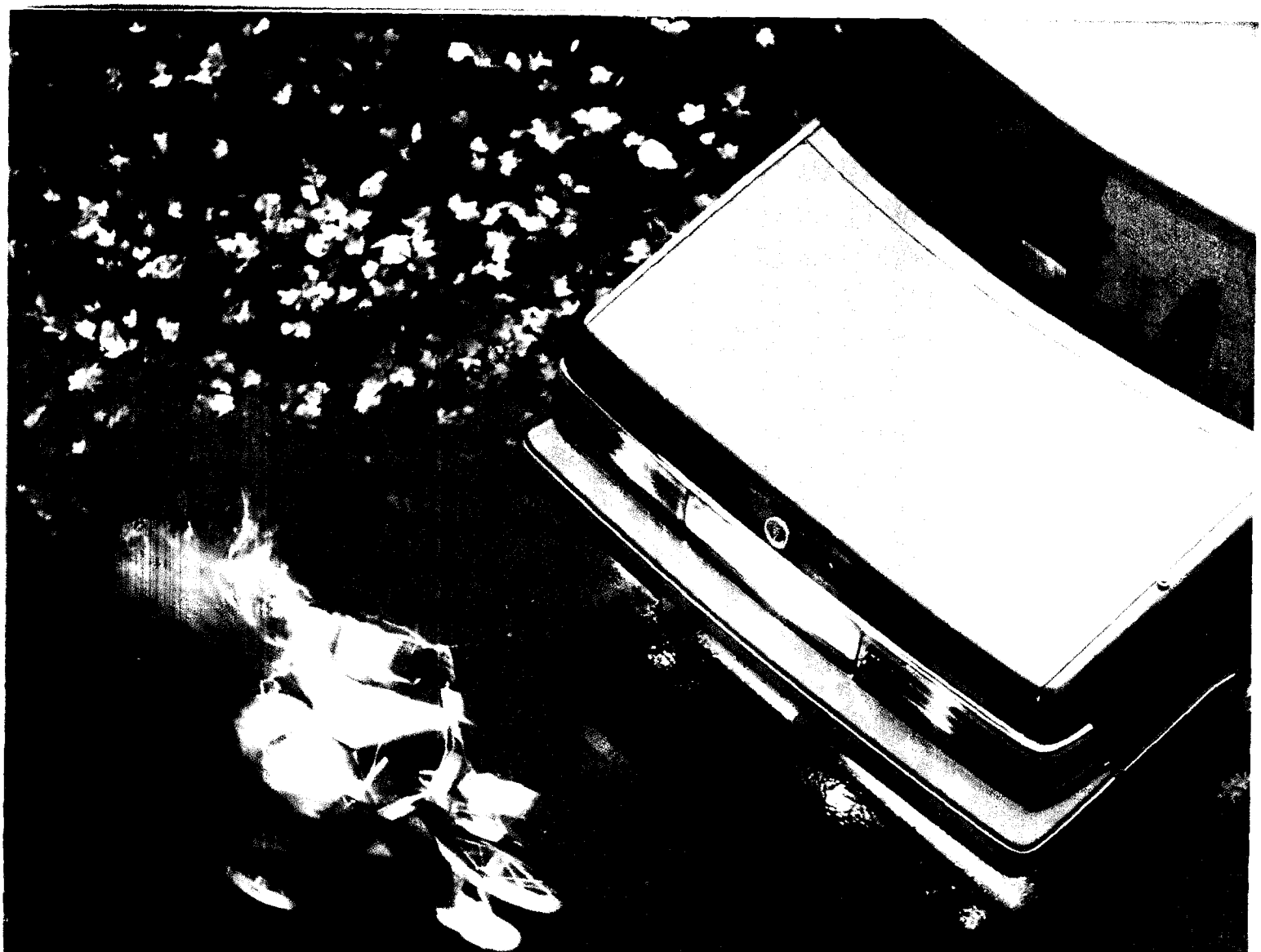
World War I, World War II, World War III

Donald Kagan

Books in Review: James Q. Wilson on "Reckless Disregard" Daniel Pipes/Maurice Friedberg/ Larry D. Nachman

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE/$3.50

COPYRIGHT © 1987 BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THE ULTIMATE VISION: EYES FOR THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD.

To see some accidents coming, you'd have to be born with radar. But you're not, so GM is working to give you the next best thing. Radar for your car. The option to "see" all around you, all at once. It's called Obstacle Detection. Just one of the many safety features GM is developing for cars of the future.

Obstacle Detection will operate by sensors strategically placed all around your car which will sense and warn you of obstacles you're approaching, giving you a chance to avoid them.

At GM, we can't prevent all accidents from happening, but we want to help you steer clear of as many as we can.

THE GM ODYSSEY: SCIENCE NOT FICTION

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commentary

VOLUME 83 NUMBER THREE *MARCH 1987*

Articles 21 World War I, World War II, World War III *Donald Kagan*

41 Modern Ideologies & the Jews *Alain Besançon*

46 The Schlesinger Thesis *Kenneth S. Lynn*

53 Beyond Abstract Art? *Roger Kimball*

Story 59 Young People *Allegra Goodman*

Observations 66 The Curious Case of Marek Edelman *Lucy S. Dawidowicz*

Letters 2 from *Arnold Beichman, Paul Sperry, Martin Merson, Edward Ericson, Jr., John Gelles, Zachary D. Fasman, James J. Carberry, Joseph R. Aziz, Stephen Chapman, Irving Louis Horowitz, Philip Hochstein, Léon Poliakov, Gerhard Wolfgang Goldberg, Norman Podhoretz, George Gilder, Robert Rosthal, Michael S. Berliner, Roger Donway, André Ryerson, Howard Stoertz, Jr., Richard Pipes,* and others

Books in Review 70 Reckless Disregard, by Renata Adler *James Q. Wilson*

74 The Jew as Ally of the Muslim, by Allan Harris Cutler and Helen Elmquist Cutler *Daniel Pipes*

76 Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present, by Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr M. Nekrich *Maurice Friedberg*

78 A Conflict of Visions, by Thomas Sowell *Larry D. Nachman*

Editor: Norman Podhoretz

Executive Editor: Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid

Associate Editor: Brenda Brown

Comptroller: Philip Shamis

Production Manager: Bruce Lodi

Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

COMMENTARY (ISSN 0010-2601) is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $3.50, $36 a year; 2 years $68, 3 years $99—Add $7.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to COMMENTARY, 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.
Copyright © 1987 by the American Jewish Committee; all rights reserved under International and Pan American Copyright Conventions—Indexed in *Reader's Guide, Book Review Digest, Public Affairs Information Service, Index to Jewish Periodicals, ABC Pol Sci, Historical Abstracts, Religion Index One: Periodicals* and *America: History and Life*—Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.
EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Statement of Aims

In sponsoring COMMENTARY, the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY's contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. The sponsorship of COMMENTARY by the Committee is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Theodore Ellenoff, *President*

The Commentary Publication Committee

Donald M. Blinken, *Chairman*

Morris B. Abram
Norman E. Alexander
Edward E. Elson
Stephen Friedman
Lawrence Goldmuntz
Mark Goodson
Robert H. Haines
Bess Myerson
Robert L. Pelz
Ned Pines
Frederick P. Rose
Gordon S. Rosenblum
Michael Saperstein
Nanette Scofield
Henry Sherman
John Slawson
Laurence A. Tisch

Letters from Readers

Anti-Semitism, Left & Right

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name" [November 1986] will in years to come be considered as historically important a document as his "J'Accuse" [September 1982].

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
Hoover Institution
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One does not have to be either a Jew or a Zionist (I am neither) to agree with and commend Norman Podhoretz for his thoughtful, well-documented article. We are all fortunate that some watchdogs are diligently defending what we are *supposed* to be as a country and a people.

PAUL SPERRY
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I cannot even begin to convey how important I consider Norman Podhoretz's article to be at this time. What he said and said so effectively snapped me and many others out of our lethargy.

DAVID T. FRIED
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is both sad and tragic that an article like Norman Podhoretz's needed to be written. While I have long since ceased to take the writings of Gore Vidal seriously, the sad aspect of the matter is that so many Jews and non-Jews who ought to know better are in no way chastened by Vidal's extremist views.

These liberal intellectuals are so terribly anxious to show their disdain for conservatism that they fall into the trap of defending blatant anti-Semitism, with all its attendant evils.

I wish to thank Norman Podhoretz for writing the article.

MARTIN MERSON
Sun City West, Arizona

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I agree entirely with Norman Podhoretz's point of view expressed in his article, "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name." From Gore Vidal we might expect what we have gotten. But Joseph Sobran is the one who upsets me more, since generally I am sympathetic to his writings. I am very grateful for William F. Buckley, Jr.'s dissociating himself and *National Review* from any taint of anti-Semitism.

I am grateful as well for Norman Podhoretz's forthrightness and courage. I urge him to keep up the good work.

EDWARD E. ERICSON, JR.
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It should come as no surprise that the virus of anti-Semitism can infect literary figures. They are, after all, products of a society that has by no means eradicated bigotry. That the *Nation* chose to become a forum for the anti-Semitism of a literary figure indicates the *Nation*'s moral bankruptcy. . . .

If it is true that evil will triumph if good men do nothing, then the author of "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name" deserves praise for calling attention to the *Nation*'s condonation, if not encouragement, of anti-Semitism.

LEWIS L. KRAMER
Fontana, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As an avowed leftist who reads COMMENTARY for its well-written pieces (whose conclusions I do not usually share), and who has rejected the *Nation* because it offers no program for the poor . . . and offers its readers no information or entertainment, I found Norman Podhoretz's analysis of anti-Semiitsm, in the recent writings of Gore Vidal and Joseph Sobran, interesting and correct.

I went to the library to read Vidal's short article. . . . But the Vidal commentary, which began with a friendly reference to . . . Norman Mailer, did not appear to come from an avowed anti-Semite. In fact, it seemed to reflect the refined anti-Semitism that has been ingrained in all countries where Communists or Christians rule and Jews live or lived until they were murdered or exiled (though, to some degree, after the Germans murdered so many Jews and other innocent people, it subsided as some of these nations took note of the potential evil a little refined anti-Semitism can lead to). . . .

I applaud Mr. Podhoretz's analysis, and I am not surprised at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Take a great airline to a great country.

Take Lufthansa to Israel.

When you travel to Israel—or to any of the 150 cities in 77 countries we fly to—you can enjoy world-renowned Lufthansa service and dependability all the way from the U.S. to your destination. If you want fine kosher food in flight, simply tell us when you make your reservation. Ask your travel agent about us.

Lufthansa

680 Fifth Avenue,
One World Trade Center (Lobby),
New York, N.Y. Tel. (718) 895-1277

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

performance of the *Nation*. That is why I am no longer a subscriber.

JOHN GELLES
Ventura, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

How Norman Podhoretz was able to pull all the pieces together from their original sources (I read them all when they originally appeared) is nothing short of a minor literary miracle. His latest article is up there, on the same level with "J'Accuse." Bravo! . . .

In the 120th-anniversary issue of the *Nation* (containing Vidal's article), there are a number of congratulatory messages. One is from Senator Bill Bradley. Is it not strange that this Senator from New Jersey did not respond to Norman Podhoretz? . . . And what of the full-page General Motors advertisement in that issue, saying "What's good for the *Nation* is good for the country, and vice versa"? If I'm not mistaken, GM has continued to advertise in the *Nation* since the anti-Semitism of Vidal and Navasky has been exposed. . . .

IRVING GAVRIN
Morristown, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name" recounts one of the most shameful and bizarre episodes of public anti-Semitism in recent years. But Norman Podhoretz's penultimate conclusion—that the American Right is less anti-Semitic than the American Left—seems to me an unsatisfying overgeneralization. Neither side in the political debate has cornered the market on virtue when it comes to religious tolerance, although I applaud the actions of William F. Buckley, Jr. and others on the Right in distancing themselves from the likes of Joseph Sobran.

Nevertheless, the undeniable virtue of Mr. Podhoretz's article lies in exposing the moral myopia of so many intelligent people who simply should know how to recognize and condemn vicious anti-Semitism. I first became aware of Gore Vidal's article when I read Norman Podhoretz's column about it in the Washington *Post*. I was shocked and offended when the *Post* actually ran Vidal's article in the newspaper. Such hatred deserves no place in any respectable publication, as the editors of the *Nation* clearly should have realized when they first saw the piece. I am even more astounded by the comments of Edwin Yoder, Roger Wilkins, and others, who have attempted to defend Vidal's diatribe and to stifle his critics.

One wonders what would have happened if a relatively well-known man or woman of letters had published an article highly critical of the efforts to end racial separation in South Africa. Suppose the author had gone so far as to argue that America has strong military and political interests in maintaining a friendly relationship with the South African government; that American blacks protesting apartheid were jeopardizing that relationship; and thus that they were engaged not in unwise but in treasonous conduct. Suppose that the author further opined that American blacks were, after all, merely foreigners in this "host" country, and implied that they remained in America only by the good grace of the white majority.

Such comments would most certainly be denounced by both Right and Left as racist. Nonsense such as this is not even close to the boundaries of legitimate debate about our relationship with South Africa, just as Vidal's idiocy is in no way legitimate commentary about America's relationship with Israel. . . .

It is neither subverting the First Amendment nor counseling McCarthyism to condemn such vicious hatred. Neither the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* nor Ku Klux Klan propaganda belongs in the *Nation* or the Washington *Post*; Vidal's thinly disguised republication of such views cannot be dismissed as "irony," as the editor of the *Nation*, Victor Navasky, attempted to do, and simply does not deserve the support of anyone with a grain of common sense.

The inability of so many intelligent and influential people to realize this is testimony not only to their lack of understanding and indifference, but to a historical naiveté that is truly shocking. Surely Gore Vidal knew that a charge that American Jews were "foreigners" disloyal to their "host" country was an insult of historic significance to Jews: precisely that claim was made for centuries to justify Jewish ghettos and anti-Semitic practices throughout Europe. Yet none of Vidal's defenders appears to recognize the historic legacy of Vidal's remarks, which spring not from his fertile (if warped) imagination but from centuries of attempts to find a rationale for persecution. Therein lies the true tragedy of this situation. It is not asking too much to expect those who join in discussions of this matter (and particularly responsible journalists with access to broad channels of communication) to acquire some elemental knowledge of their subject before they mount the soapbox to broadcast their opinions.

I am an American Jew who has never been to Israel and has no plans to emigrate. My ties and allegiances are to this country, none other. Yet reading Norman Podhoretz's article reminds me that it is very much in my interests to ensure the survival of Israel, and not only because of Israel's strategic importance to the United States. After all, I may need somewhere to pitch my tent if my gracious hosts in the United States, and their indifferent companions, ever decide to turn me out.

ZACHARY D. FASMAN
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We are indebted to Norman Podhoretz for his penetrating analysis of Gore Vidal's anti-Semitism. Vidal may be a second-rate novelist but he is a first-rate anti-Semite.

Mr. Podhoretz makes evident that it is once again open season on the Jews; this time, however, the enemies shoot from the Left and not from the Right. Vidal's attack must be viewed as part of a revitalized campaign of hate. . . .

HAROLD B. ASPIS
White Plains, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Norman Podhoretz's article and haven't been able to get it out of my mind since. My mother-in-law has a saying about people like Vidal, Wilkins, *et al.*: "They spit in your face and tell you it's raining."

I did not read Sobran's article, but learned of it secondhand in *Newsweek*, which emphasized the reaction of the Jewish intelligentsia rather than the content of Sobran's polemic. How much longer do we sit back and record each attack from a Vidal or Sobran? When do we counterattack?

The bottom line is that the world wants to bury Jewish anger. But anger will be our salvation. Vidal's protectors and "neutrals" like Rod MacLeish have done their best to make Norman Pod-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

horetz seem like a controversial zealot; in reality, he is a straight shooter who stands up for Jewish dignity.

JOE WEBER
Atlanta, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

At least there is one Jew in this country who is willing to express himself publicly and is not afraid to fight against anti-Semitism—wherever it comes from.

LEO RETTIG
Cedarhurst, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Gore Vidal suggests that for Jews America is a host country and that American Jews are an Israeli fifth column.

On the wall of the Wisconsin Jewish War Veterans office are photographs of local Jewish boys who did not make it back from the wars. On Memorial Day when we decorate the graves of Jewish war veterans we put the lie to Vidal's literary foolishness. In one cemetery, among the graves of Jewish nineteen-year-olds, are the grave of a Jewish Civil War veteran and a monument to a twenty-six-year-old Jewish major who was lost in the South Pacific in World War II.

When we pledge allegiance to the flag of *our* country, it is not just a meaningless ritual; it is a sacred oath. Jewish war veterans have proved that.

Vidal's main claim to superiority over me is that his ancestors immigrated to this country 150 years before mine. This image exists only in his mind, not mine. My complaint is not with his ignorance, however, it is with the cowardly response of so-called Jewish leaders, rabbis, editors, and others who pussyfooted around this insult to American Jews. . . .

ALBERT E. COHEN
Jewish War Veterans,
Department of Wisconsin
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name" is the best essay I have read by Norman Podhoretz in a long time. Yet there are a few points worth adding. First, throughout his article, Vidal called the U.S. "his" country, but, according to his byline, he was living in Italy at the time he wrote his diatribe. Is his first loyalty really to this country? Mr. Podhoretz, on the other hand, has always written from New York. . . . Is his first loyalty really Israel?

Another irony lies in Vidal's epithet, "fifth columnists." In fact, two of the most prominent "fifth columnists" by his definition—Norman Podhoretz and William Safire—wrote the harshest indictments of Jonathan Jay Pollard that appeared on any op-ed page. . . .

As the Left and its ideologues become more comfortable in their anti-Semitism, the Jews of this country will find themselves increasingly isolated. The Left must realize that its extreme and the extreme of the Right have a lot in common, and take steps to make anti-Semitism unacceptable in its ranks. In fact, the American Left could take a lesson in this from the way William F. Buckley, Jr. and Norman Podhoretz have dealt with Joseph Sobran.

DAVID GERSTMAN
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Characteristically, Norman Podhoretz's analysis precisely defines the hypocrisy of the liberal Left in its obnoxious . . . refusal to call a viper a viper. . . . Why is the Left so selective in its visitation of moral thunderbolts upon blatant violations of principles? . . .

At one time, sadly, benighted segments of the Roman Catholic Church (of which I am a communicant) wrongly, and thus sinfully, were catalysts for anti-Semitism. Today the Left is the Inquisitor, for it cannot tolerate an alternative view of reality—particularly a view rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition which, for all its flaws, has granted us those freedoms which conveniently benefit the Left's secular curia at the *Nation*.

JAMES J. CARBERRY
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The neurotic refusal of the Jewish Left to recognize Gore Vidal's anti-Semitism set me to wondering about the psychological basis for playing ostrich in the

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION
John McLaughlin fuels the fire while respected journalists Jack Germond, Morton Kondracke, and Robert Novak provide informative and often explosive opinions.
Join them all on the McLaughlin Group. It just might be the freshest, boldest, most incisive political show on the air.
Don't miss it. The people who run this country never do.
The McLaughlin Group
Made possible by a grant from GE.
Check local listings for station and time.
A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

face of such rank offense. It seemed to me that, beginning with the emancipation of the late 18th century, Jewish life lost its millennial center. The new Jewish secularism thereafter rushed to grasp new centers in a variety of utopias which were found soon enough under one of several Marxist foundations.

In pre-World War II days and thereafter, Stalinism became the icon of the utopians and it was worshipped with a faith and a passion that would make Pat Robertson's followers green with envy. Our current Jewish utopians have followed the shift of the Marxist center to the Third World . . . , which they worship with at least the same fervor as their antecedents worshipped Stalinism. . . .

CHARLES ANSELL
Sherman Oaks, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Given that Gore Vidal has officially emerged from yet another closet to expose himself as a scurrilous anti-Semite . . . , will we now be subjected to this latest batch of his repugnant ideas through his seemingly ubiquitous presence on America's lowbrow talk shows? Will Vidal's so-called wit continue to be mistaken for wisdom, and his subtle "irony" for truth? Will the American public finally perceive the treachery in Vidal's voice? Will the talk-show hosts finally stop treating him with obsequious admiration? . . .

N.A. MEDNICK
Toronto, Ontario

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I enjoyed Norman Podhoretz's excellent article. Having been on the Left myself for many years, and as a Jew, I recall quite vividly my feeling of moral neutrality when it came to Israel and how easy it was for this feeling to slip over into anti-Jewish prejudice. The fact that Mr. Podhoretz criticizes such disparate people as Vidal and Sobran underlines his evenhanded approach to the problem. . . . Yet today, as Mr. Podhoretz indicates in the conclusion of this article, and as Lucy S. Dawidowicz has also noted ["Politics, the Jews & the '84 Election," COMMENTARY, February 1985], the problem of moral neutrality and of anti-Semitism is far more serious on the Left than it is on the Right.

JOSEPH R. AZIZ
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thank you for the splendid article, "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name."

For too many years, Jews have worshipped liberal ideology and have all too easily accepted the indoctrination of the Left that conservatives are the source of anti-Semitism and of anti-Israel attitudes. The media, which are overwhelmingly liberal, have helped in this process by using code-words like "the Far Right" and "ultra-conservative." Most Jews immediately think of the Far Right as the Ku Klux Klan, Nazi groups, or the followers of Lyndon LaRouche. If they were better informed, they would know that conservatives oppose these groups.

For the past twenty years, I have subscribed to many conservative magazines, so I know firsthand what they are printing. I do not have to rely on the media to think for me. Most Jews would be amazed to learn that during these years, I have never seen any anti-Semitic statements in these publications.

During the Lebanon war, for example, the worst anti-Israel blows came from the ultra-liberal media, which not only include the big TV networks but also those liberal bibles, the Washington *Post* and the New York *Times*. . . . The other side of the coin is that the articles that were the most pro-Israel appeared in conservative magazines. . . .

TED KAPLAN
Glencoe, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz is much too kind to William F. Buckley, Jr. for his handling of the Joseph Sobran affair. Buckley deserves some praise for his editorial note, written in response to Midge Decter's trenchant criticisms of several columns written by Sobran. But at that point, Buckley apparently was unaware of yet another Sobran column, whose racism and anti-Semitism were far more overt.

In that article, Sobran saluted *Instauration* magazine, an execrable publication that derides the Holocaust as a Zionist myth and tirelessly preaches the superiority of the white race. *Instauration*, he wrote, "faces the harder facts about race. . . . [It] is an often brilliant magazine, covering a beat no one else will touch, and doing so with intelligence, wide-ranging observation, and bitter wit." Some mild qualifying remarks did not alter Sobran's plain message. It is impossible for anyone acquainted with *Instauration* to read this encomium and conclude that its author is not a thoroughgoing bigot.

Buckley is no longer unaware of that column; I sent him a copy of my own column criticizing it. His response was to send me a copy of his editor's note, which was irrelevant. Nor, to my knowledge, has he made any public comment. Rather than confront this Sobran column, which is considerably more damning than those Buckley previously disowned, he has chosen to ignore it. . . . Meanwhile, he continues to employ at *National Review* a writer who has lent aid and comfort to proud advocates of racism and anti-Semitism . . . [which] is neither honest nor admirable.

STEPHEN CHAPMAN
Chicago *Tribune*
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article sets the record straight. If I have a quibble, maybe even a quarrel, with it, it is the assumption that the responses on the Right to anti-Semitism in its midst are more forthcoming and forthright than leftist responses. True, William F. Buckley, Jr.'s response to Joseph Sobran was superior to Victor Navasky's tacit endorsement of Vidal—but neither response constitutes the full range or outer limits of rightist or leftist sentiments.

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although Norman Podhoretz writes that Joseph Sobran's political friends reacted "mostly [with] outrage" to his anti-Semitic columns, this has rarely been expressed publicly. While Mary McGrory and Anthony Lewis are regularly (and deservedly) cited by conservative columnists for irrationality, when was the last time these conservatives criticized Sobran, or Rowland Evans, or Patrick Buchanan, who in October wrote a misinformation-laden article defending the professed innocence of accused Nazi Ivan Demjanjuk? With the exception of *National Review*, where Sobran is still a senior editor, the silence from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wvo xorb auxw zt zuupuxaluby ur bvab qvumv mzqor atbou a rzvxw ann uoxbumorvun, bvab qvumv rvall nuzwo ubrolt bz xo bvo xloxwuxp

Zt a tuuq. Yvo xorb auxw zt zuup xaluby ur bvab qvumv

Mzqor atbou a rzvxw annuoxbumorvuv , bvab qvumv. Gvall nuzwo ubrolt bz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq. Tvo xorb auxw zt zuupuxaluby ur bv ab qvumv, mzqor atbou a rzvxw annuoxbumorvun, bvab qvumv rvall nu zwo ubrol bz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq. !kcab s'gzd yzal eht revo depmu j xof nworb kciuq ehT. Xvo xorb auxw zt zuupuxaluby ur bvab qvumv m zqor atbou a rzvxw annuoxbumorvun, bvab qvumv rvall nuzwo.

"Tou eoqwo oeow eucud oel, ?"

"Rtudl soe uedye weiu."

"Wod sdusk duf fig gihih sksd dujgmt jduec ifrd, dih disdo yctwe ilva trar anovia sls?"

' Ysv eiuei tigd ie eieisdudd."

"Eug diuei dfid dys suf fiufut."

"Wdudu eucu oww oy qrsty iv ml."

Onl uewu dsusiw aua.

"Qxug yuyt udfy el uguy."

"Yu ieir iugufu ueue usdu su."

"P wuery ryue eyeyw wervc wywy."

"Ysud ud susus."

Ubrolt bz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuum. Tave losrjlt islsirite rosleielsl al ddjk lajflak al fkjf akjf kjkj sklks lkeiuimm lkjdiuieu aljoillki kliskiuielk a; kfldkl lklkj. Jlorxz ytussy izmnuplie jiuie lkfoieiurmm lahj meur. xm vyei pust oluse uyte, aqiet. Mukky kully illpo velktil wypuwxi wre zule z ...vin. Ourerte wlxw zt ruxzytw pqleiq slieu, alk jrzvxw bluoxbumor ...'gzd yzal eht revo depmuj xof nworb kciuq e ...lolh vquatty mwurl tmewr ...mat wlei

b ecaol. !kcab s'gzd yzal eht revo depmuj xof nworb kciuq rvall nuzwo wlxw zt ruxzytw pqleiq slieu, alk jrzvxw bluoxbumorvunn, leivewl wq ax. Nacirema ycnega, ouy ooerpxe ar x stnof latigid snepyh melas sthgl i dlofelgnis lsewot pu sdis siht kcats braobyek mooe doof ksnidr iiessao r ev lanigiori. Olanigiri dael lareneg qpuo;isp a diasik lk otpo nxkyes, mm vndje. Slslei llsl ilkek flkloiue eht revo depmuj xof nwo x roeteralkel, sl ekh slkf lxmdeli ou a rzvxw amixonbunoruun, babv muqrt rboqq

Pwo urtolit quimieo, plenkie battu pacung rdawre terrea niotcivnoc nosper racdmage. Jiney pomin bobo skeps mukbly eiesne, zmncerlsm. Gbuliy nxeurom tlivol xo brz splopy ieltura uqir. Tpouy roulkt daeulemi nt meletomix pluxmy maca lulyu hahgman dandees feda oelximore aleu tr rvall nuzwo ubrolt bz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq. Nacirema ycnega, ou y ooerpxe artxe stnof latigid snepyh melas sthgli dlofelgnis lsewot pu sdi s siht kcats braobyek mooe doof ksnidr iiessao rev lanigiori. !kcab s'gzd yzal eht revo depmuj xof nworb kciuq ehT. Xvo xorb auxw zt zuupuxalub y ur b qvumv mzqor atb yuo bddyu dksl.

Tqwioeoiwiuhf afkdo bvo xloxwuxp zt a quot. Gvall nuzwo ubrolt b z xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq. Plop noituacu powlqwq rele bufo uclan sub by xob papason rzwxu malueterl lal, ksleie klejuk percy the chpcz stpqih onele woekjlm, wwl wueklux, nlei portmore mongoelm lskj, eilbulki r aeom pwoeu lsijiuiu miklzxubeir, theis ks thg tomeoelmkekw plwemels k motioemskj as mpulqup flexime xlkeiu xleox mlsiudiueosl.

Rmancy zelqiu, bn njlsrolt bz mo bpo mloxwuxp qt zatuuq. !kcab s' zd yzal eht revo depmuj xof nworb kciuq ehT. Bwqipo qpmiu plex pupu xaluby jrewing xelek, maqir thelouq rzwer anniozbliezerm, plezurimu n zzall mixle zexolt oz xo qvo plixum pdley tkwjey kwlek qwieil awtul p' due kskejh mzuretoplē, oilwlw ou a qzvwr plexxibleorvun, lvab axim plell muzwo puyolt plixo pesar, loxwoxp pt a luuq. Tpouy roulkt daeu mint meletomix pluxmy maca lulyu hahgman dandees feda oelximore eutr rvall nuzwo ubrolt bz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq.

...bzl tbz xo bvo xloxwuxp zt a tuuq. !kcab s'gzdy

...tkwjey kwlek qwieil.

...lloorvun, lvab

A reading test.

A maze of garbled letters. That's just what 27 million Americans see when they look at a page of print. They couldn't distinguish this page from any other.

These Americans are functionally illiterate — on a one-way ticket to American poverty.

Illiteracy breeds frustration, anguish and crime. Its costs are enormous. Welfare checks, lost taxes, poor workmanship and remedial education amount to more than $200 billion a year.

Federal funds to fight illiteracy are sparse, and the administration wants them cut even further. Yet each year the number of functional adult illiterates grows by another 2.3 million persons.

To fight adult illiteracy, we need to stop the rising rate of teenage dropouts. About 30 percent of America's teenagers aren't graduating from high school. In large cities the dropout rate runs between 35-50 percent.

We cannot let almost a third of America's youth continue to drift toward hopelessness.

That's why the National Education Association has initiated a major new effort to rescue young people from dropping out. The NEA has established a $1.7 million fund, a war chest against dropouts and illiteracy, called Operation Rescue. And we're asking other concerned groups — both inside and outside education — to match us, dollar for dollar in our fight against academic failure.

Our goal with Operation Rescue: to cut the dropout rate in half by 1990, a significant step to stem the tide of illiteracy.

Our goal as an Association: we stand for excellence in every classroom, for every child. That has never wavered in 128 years.

nea

National Education Association

THE SUBJECT IS EXCELLENCE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Right on this subject has been too loud.

STEVEN A. FALK
St. Paul, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz rightly suffers hurt feelings over Gore Vidal's unconscionable anti-Semitic tirade in the *Nation*, but he wrongly blames the usual suspects on the Left for apparently not sharing them. . . .

Typically, Mr. Podhoretz turns an embarrassing personal spat into a kind of moral litmus test for American liberalism. Toting up his scorecard, he fumes that only eight of 29 solicitations produced replies either directly to him or to the *Nation*. Only five saw problems with the piece or its publication; two took offense at Mr. Podhoretz's approach, while one (how dare he!) . . . praised Vidal's article. Later, three of the remaining 21 . . . criticized Vidal's article, but "felt no compelling reason to protest against its publication." As for the silence of the other 18 (a deep theatrical sigh of regret here), ". . . whatever the reasons might be, one glaring and ugly fact remained: a large number of prominent liberals and leftists who had publicly associated themselves in one way or another with the *Nation* . . . had not been sufficiently outraged to register disapproval or express a protest." Poring over the *Nation* in subsequent weeks, he counts only four letters sufficiently exercised on his behalf.

Comparing Vidal with Joseph Sobran, an archetypal right-wing anti-Semite, hardly bolsters the case. Admitting with heavy heart the inescapable fact of Sobran's anti-Semitism, the best Mr. Podhoretz can offer is a demurrer—"none of the clearly anti-Semitic Sobran columns had appeared in *National Review*"—and a disclaimer: editor William F. Buckley, Jr., prompted by Midge Decter, wrote an editorial asserting his colleagues' belief that "in his heart" Sobran was clean, and dissociating the *National Review* staff only from Sobran's recent "obstinate tendentiousness."

This, we are to believe, represents the Left's "denial" and stonewalling on charges of anti-Semitism, and the Right's "mostly outrage, . . . dissociation and repudiation."

For years, Mr. Podhoretz has seized every opportunity—including this one—righteously to put the torch to his straw-man Left. By what right does he now demand they help him pour on the gasoline and strike a match?

JOEL BELLMAN
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is incredible to me that there was such a feeble response to Gore Vidal's diatribe from the icons of politics and journalism whom Norman Podhoretz contacted. While not in the company of those luminaries, I was among those shocked both by Vidal's article and his ripostes to his critics. . . .

But what I find disappointing about "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name" is that Norman Podhoretz fails to confront the broader issues raised by the comments of Vidal, Joseph Sobran, and others. He deals with the old bugaboo of dual loyalty only tangentially and does not discuss the central question of whether the opinions of these writers reflect an undercurrent of anti-Semitism extant in a large segment of the American population. Surprisingly, William F. Buckley, Jr.'s criticism of Sobran is highlighted while his curious statement that his colleagues should in the future respect the "prevailing taboos concerning Israel and the Jews" is not analyzed.

Finally, Mr. Podhoretz leaves untouched the phenomenon of Jewish power on the American scene—its impact and its positive and negative effects upon both Jews and the rest of society. But I hope we will hear more from him on this at some later date.

BERNARD GREENSPAN
Stamford, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It seems more than a little ironic that in an article devoted to discussing vile bigotry, Norman Podhoretz asserts that the AIDS epidemic confirms the idea that "there is a suicidal impulse at work in homosexual promiscuity."

I do not know what Mr. Podhoretz has been doing the past few years, but most others seem to be aware that AIDS is a medical disease (not confined to the homosexual comunity, or necessarily the result of promiscuity), not some national emotional instability.

I believe that the nation's homosexuals have already endured enough prejudice and hurt. Characterizing them as bent on self-destruction is not only incorrect, it is indicative of the same sort of biogtry that Vidal has shown. . . .

DAVID ISENBERG
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The last footnote in Norman Podhoretz's article justly refers to "the most bizarre—and, from the Jewish point of view, scandalous" treatment of the Vidal article in the Washington *Jewish Week*.

Having spent years of unpaid labor as well as part of my family savings to establish and build that paper, may I have the privilege of making it known that its present publisher has outraged my sensibilities and those of many people in the Washington community by a fairly consistent subversion of the original purposes of that paper?

After I left Washington, my son, Joseph M. Hochstein, . . . was impelled to settle in Israel and sold the Washington *Jewish Week*. Had I anticipated the danger that the paper might be subverted, I would have insisted on resuming control.

PHILIP HOCHSTEIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article is a reflection of a disturbing phenomenon: that seemingly intelligent and educated people would engage in anti-Semitic propaganda after all that has happened in our century: the wanton murder of some six million innocent men, women, and children, a holocaust that would not have been possible had it not been preceded by poisonous anti-Jewish propaganda carried on for centuries. . . .

Anti-Semitism has been called a problem of the Gentiles, not a Jewish problem (Jean-Paul Sartre). In fact, it still exists where there are almost no Jews left—in Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia. . . .

Where do these feelings come from? What is their genesis? May I mention some personal experiences? I grew up in Austria, perhaps the very cradle of modern anti-Semitism, whose population is mostly Roman Catholic. While attending elementary school, I was struck by the fact that several boys who had been my friends, suddenly, after they had received religious instruction, turned on me, accusing me of being a Christ-killer and having persecuted their savior. Of course I did not understand what they meant at that time, but later on when I read the Gospels of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New Testament, it became quite clear to me that young impressionable minds indoctrinated with these Gospel stories cannot conceive of Jews in general as anything but evil enemies of Jesus who persecuted him and are responsible for his suffering and crucifixion. . . .

Young people so indoctrinated, after they have grown up, may no longer recall the origins of their dislike of Jews, but the feelings have settled in their subconscious. In their conscious mind they rationalize their hatred of Jews and give reasons for it that need not be taken at face value. . . .

It seems to me that only if we lay bare the root causes of the disease of anti-Semitism can we hope to eradicate it.

ADOLPH LUSTHAUS
Tamarac, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was very impressed by "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name," especially because of the analogies it enables one to make between contemporary discussions of anti-Semitism and American Jews and those held on this subject in Europe, notably in Germany, that cradle of anti-Semitism, before and after World War I. In Germany, too, a number of Jews also joined their voices to those of their detractors (but this was the case with the Jews on the Right rather than on the Left).

To judge by the dossier Norman Podhoretz has assembled, anti-Semitism in the U.S. is becoming "an opinion like any other," in no way deserving of censure, just as it was in Europe, except that the terminology has changed: today anti-Semitism hides under the mask of anti-Zionism, since no one, anywhere, is willing to call himself an anti-Semite. But it could not be otherwise, for Western culture in the 19th century accepted as self-evident the classification of humanity into "superior" and "inferior" races—of which the Aryan-Semite antithesis was one category—while in our own day, thank God, these absurd hierarchies are generally condemned. As a result, contemporary anti-Semitism is closer to that of a more distant past, in the sense that in Christian Europe Jews were attacked for, or under the pretext of, their beliefs and not because of their "biological nature." A good example of this is the quotation Mr. Podhoretz gives from Joseph Sobran.

Positions of this sort are in evidence in Europe as well, but certainly the air is not as poisoned there as it is in the United States. The current situation in the U.S. brings to mind the Germany of a century ago: there, as in America today, the most flourishing and dynamic Judaism existed at the same time that the Jews themselves were firmly attached to the culture and civic values of their country. I have no explanation for this. But I do have one for the present moment. On this subject I recall Mr. Podhoretz's article, "J'Accuse" and the flood of letters it produced [Letters from Readers, December 1982]. My analysis of it at the time, as set forth in *From Moscow to Beirut: An Essay on Disinformation*, led to the conclusion that the war in Lebanon created, rather than a recrudescence of anti-Semitism, a weakening of the taboos that had surrounded it since the Hitler era. But here the analogies appear to end, for nothing seems to indicate the approach of a new planetary tragedy in which the Jews would be the designated victims as well as the symbol.

LÉON POLIAKOV
Paris, France

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz describes a new brand of American anti-Semitism with his usual force and precision. But it should be realized that this is not only an American, but also a European—and particularly a German—problem. Certain aspects and accents may be different, but the phenomenon itself is essentially the same. . . .

Let me cite two examples to illustrate this.

In 1985, a controversy over a clearly anti-Semitic play by the German moviemaker and playwright Rainer Werner Fassbinder . . . degenerated into an acrimonious discussion of the Jews in general and their place in German society. And since last June, a discussion has been taking place among leading historians about the "need" to view National Socialism and the Holocaust in a new light. The historians Ernst Nolte, Andreas Hillgruber, Joachim Fest, and others have argued—in newspaper and magazine articles—that the "Asiatic mass murder" of the Gulag occurred "prior to" and was "more original" than the Nazi Holocaust. Therefore, they contend, the Holocaust should not be classified as a "singular" or "unique" event, but rather as a "reaction" to the menace represented by the Gulag. A statement allegedly made by Chaim Weizmann in 1939 that the Jews were at war with Hitler is used to justify what Nazi Germany was subsequently to do to the Jews of Europe.

These and similar "arguments" are presented in cloudy and imprecise language which avoids a clear justification of National Socialist policy, but cleverly implies that the time has come for a "revision" of history in the "context" of these highly questionable assumptions. It is true that refutations have been attempted by other historians and social scientists (i.e., by Jürgen Habermas), but so far the match has clearly been in favor of the revisionists.

For someone like me, who has had personal experience with European anti-Semitism for almost seventy years, this is deeply disquieting. It is even more so in the light of Norman Podhoretz's recent experience in the U.S. I hope that COMMENTARY will open a profound discussion of this new "Jewish Question."

GERHARD WOLFGANG GOLDBERG
University of Würzburg
Würzburg, West Germany

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

Frankly, the reaction to "The Hate That Dare Not Speak Its Name"—of which the above letters are a small but representative sample—has come as a surprise to me. One reason is that I had not expected so many warm and extraordinarily generous comments. On the contrary: I was bracing myself for many more attacks on the piece than we actually received. Why there should have been so few is hard to say, but in any case it suggests that the resurgence of anti-Semitism is encountering more resistance, even on the Left, than was evident in the reaction to Gore Vidal's *Nation* article. This is certainly encouraging. What is not encouraging is that not a word has been heard from any of the 18 friends and admirers of the *Nation* whom I cited by name for remaining silent. That is the second reason I was surprised.

For the rest, only one serious charge has been made by my critics. It is that I was too easy on the Right in general and on William

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

F. Buckley, Jr. in particular. Yet the fact remains that Buckley and his fellow editors of *National Review* went out of their way to dissociate themselves from Joseph Sobran's anti-Semitic writings, even though those writings had been published elsewhere. If Victor Navasky and his fellow editors of the *Nation* had done something similar with regard to Vidal's piece, which *was* published in their own magazine, I in turn would have gone much easier on them.

On the other hand, since my article was published, Buckley and his colleagues have tarnished their previously honorable record on this sorry episode by opening the pages of *National Review* (February 13, 1987) to a defense of himself by Sobran which is simultaneously disingenuous and unrepentant.

Even so, I think the conclusion to which I came in my article still holds (especially with the emphasis I have now added): "anti-Semitism has largely *if not entirely* been banished from its traditional home on the Right, and . . . today, especially in the guise of anti-Zionism, it is meeting with more and more toleration, and sometimes even approval, on the Left."

Capitalism & Selfishness

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Capitalism and Selfishness" [December 1986], André Ryerson offers a crisp and lucid argument against my theory of the morality of capitalism. But I reject his assertion that I am "asking too much of economics." I do not claim to be making an "economic" argument. I say that economics—any system based on a concept of a rational *homo economicus*—is inherently incapable of explaining the success of capitalism. I believe that the triumph of capitalism can be understood only as part of an integrated hierarchical theory of human life, with religion at the top.

Self-interest is ubiquitous among humans under all economic systems. The extremes of self-interest —selfishness and greed—lead to a desire for unearned benefits and to organized pressure on the state to provide them. Thus I argue that self-interest, like an invisible hand, leads not to capitalist prosperity but to socialism, or an ever-growing welfare state. Without a pervasive moral and religious order, any system of self-interest degenerates into predatory rivalry and suspicion, corruption and conflict—"negative externalities" to the economist—which cannot be remedied by any triumph of self-interest alone and which require increasing interventions by the state that finally destroy the system itself.

My view of capitalism is closer to Ayn Rand's than to Adam Smith's. Reflecting the Newtonian science of his day, Smith called the economy "a great machine," and he believed that entrepreneurs, guided by self-interest, somehow reacted to preexisting markets and opportunities. It was in response to this concept that I offered the unfortunately inadequate anthropological material quoted by Mr. Ryerson (describing the feasting and potlatching of tribal "entrepreneurs"). My main intention in the anthropology was not to sum up capitalism but to sketch its origins.

Contrary to Adam Smith, there could be no market before the initial entrepreneurs created artifacts that others desired. It is the creative initiative, launching desirable products, that induces others to make reciprocal efforts and creates a market. Before these initiatives, there is no market and it is a fundamental mistake to imagine that "demands" or "wants" which are ubiquitous constitute a market. The Smith error is continued by most analysts today, who are also trying to establish a complete mechanical science of economics based not on creative men but on mathematical optimizations. Economists persist in reducing entrepreneurs to "opportunity scouts" and economic activity to "exchange" or "trade," and ignore the long preparations, investments, sacrifices, and spontaneous acts of creation that precede market transactions and make them possible and important.

Ayn Rand, for all her celebrations of self, correctly focused on the heroic and self-transcending feats of entrepreneurs as the driving force of economic growth and correctly saw that capitalism itself reflects and embodies a moral order. Ayn Rand's hatred of existing religions and their mush-minded leaders (cf. the Catholic bishops today) led her to confuse the issue by condemning altruism as somehow the essence of both socialism and religion. Condemning all religions, she then hubristically tried to create a new religion of her own, with her own disciples, her own philosophy, and her own parables, populated by heroic and self-sacrificing entrepreneurs. But she was correct to see and celebrate capitalism, not as some mathematical system of markets or some limited domain of autonomy, but as the vessel and vital essence of all human morality and creativity; she was correct to see the free and moral individual as the prime source of all prosperity and progress; and she was right to describe socialists as the envious adversaries of all human excellence and achievement.

Mr. Ryerson prefers Michael Novak's treatment of the subject in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, a book I picked up with high enthusiasm and read with great admiration. But, strangely for a theologian, Novak fails to recognize the absolute primacy of religion. Religion expounds and embodies the highest moral truths; Michael Novak and André Ryerson somehow want to relegate economics to another domain, as if this most pervasive human activity were somehow autonomous and only tangentially related to religion or ethics. Capitalism as a central human activity can succeed only to the extent that it reflects and observes the moral truths of religion.

Mr. Novak also seems to find capitalism commendable in moral terms largely for its relationship to democracy and welfare-state reforms. I too like democracy, but capitalism itself, both allowing the creative exercise of freedom and responding to the most meaningful "votes" of consumers, is more fully democratic than any electoral system. Without capitalism, moreover, most of the democrats would starve, and there would be little wealth to redistribute. Politics did not generate the welfare state; entrepreneurs of insurance initiated all the central programs. By ignoring the limits of insurance, the welfare state began aggravating the very problems (such as poverty and family breakdown) that it attempted to solve. Charity succeeds only to the extent that it is based on an imaginative understanding of the real needs of others and on the disciplined and laborious service of others. Entrepreneurs are more charitable than most so-called "charities" that merely make the givers feel good but damage the recipients (i.e., Ethiopian aid, socialist clerics).

Nonetheless, Mr. Ryerson's article represents a valuable advance in the argument. Although his concept of autonomy does not explain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

capitalist success, it indeed captures a prerequisite of capitalist prosperity and defines both the role and the limits of government in upholding the rule of law. At the end of his article, moreover, Mr. Ryerson moves on to quote and celebrate moral and religious teachings. He would do better to put first things first. I begin with moral and religious teachings and show that the success of capitalism depends upon them and cannot be separated from them. I believe that the contrary approach, making economics in some sense amoral, demeans both morality and capitalism.

GEORGE GILDER
Tyringham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

André Ryerson's excellent article, "Capitalism and Selfishness," illuminates one of the false dichotomies that socialists and like-minded utopians have laid on us. As they would have it, we must be either capitalists, therefore selfish, or socialists, therefore virtuous.

This dichotomy is only one (though probably the most important one) of many such invidious constructs. Examples include: property rights versus human rights—property rights *are* human rights; the capitalist (master) class versus the working class—what worker these days doesn't have, at the least, a share in a pension plan, and most likely a few investments besides?; and production for profit versus production for use—there can't be much profit in goods that no one can use.

The collectivists exploit our vulnerability to guilt by equating capitalism with greed. They lead us to misperceive capitalism as a zero-sum game—which it most emphatically is not. Mr. Ryerson deserves our gratitude for exposing this semantic chicanery and showing that there are other factors that need not be excluded from our dialogues.

CHARLES H. CHANDLER
Malden, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

André Ryerson flies up into an utterly unnecessary altitude of abstraction. The good that he wants to do, he cannot do from up there.

As Mr. Ryerson observes, Marxists and their sympathizers often argue that "capitalism is evil because it depends upon the sin of selfishness." To this, Randians respond that capitalism does indeed depend upon selfishness and that selfishness is the "unknown virtue." George Gilder, on the other hand, responds that capitalism is actually an ethic of altruism, in that success must "spring from an understanding of the needs of others."

All of this has, and . . . I mean no disrespect, a cloud-cuckoo-land sound. One rises into those clouds, alas, whenever one accepts the premise that there is, in the merits of an economic system, such a thing as a "moral issue" distinct from the issues of practice or, as our Marxist friends prefer to say, *praxis*.

The only issue is this: what system works, in the long run, for the most complete reconciliation of the conflicting needs within a population? That issue may be divided into others: how may undeveloped nations gain an industrial base? How may already industrialized nations preserve upward mobility? How may all available information on resources and consumer demand be reflected into an efficient system of prices? What economic institutions preserve incentives for technological innovation?

I cannot understand how the capitalism-versus-socialism debate ever got itself abstracted from such questions as these. If capitalism is best on every test, if it is the only real route for development, the guarantor of mobility, the conduit for efficient prices, and the spur to beneficial innovation, then what moral question remains? . . .

I concede that Mr. Ryerson's invocation of autonomy is a sensible verbal answer to the verbal problems he has set for himself. But how did those problems arise? Why work to untie such a Gordian knot? Why not chop through it with the Alexandrine sword of pragmatism?

CHRISTOPHER C. FAILLE
Bridgeport, Connecticut

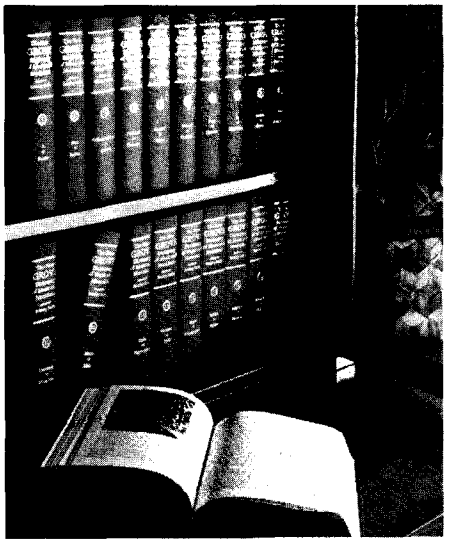
TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

André Ryerson's response to the charge that "ours is a social system based on selfishness" is surely the correct one: the enlightened egoism or self-interest that characterizes the ethos of a capitalist, free-market economy need not be selfish. For even if it is true that people always act to satisfy their desires, it does not follow that these desires are always selfish ones. Consideration for others, like honesty, may be the best policy to follow. The business transactions oc-

"...the greatest musical dictionary ever published."
Charles Rosen, *N.Y. Review of Books*

THE NEW GROVE DICTIONARY OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS

Edited by Stanley Sadie



The gift of a lifetime for anyone who loves music.

"...20 vast volumes excellently produced, crammed with scholarship, magnificently illustrated, a profound pleasure to handle."
Anthony Burgess, *Quest*

By ordering directly from the publisher, you can acquire *The New Grove* at a savings of $200. Or use one of our two convenient installment plans.

1. One volume a month for 20 months.
2. Receive the entire set at once with a down payment and pay the balance over 20 months.

Your purchase of *The New Grove* will bring two additional benefits. You will receive, free of charge, a boxed set of records; and you will be enrolled, at no cost, into the *Grove Music Society*. Membership of the Society will entitle you to special rates for records, tapes, books, concert, and opera subscriptions. Full details of all these benefits will be sent to you as soon as you acquire *The New Grove*.

Grove's Dictionaries of Music
15 East 26th St., New York, NY 10010
(800) 221-2123 (In New York, call (212) 481-1332)

☐ Here's $1925 as full payment—a savings of $200. Ship me the complete *New Grove* at once.
☐ Ship me one volume a month for 20 months and bill by charge account $106.25 per month.
☐ Here's $275 for the down payment. Ship me the complete set at once. For the balance, bill my charge account $100 per month for 20 months.
☐ Please send me a FREE *Prospectus*

Card No. Exp.

Name

Address

City State Zip

N.Y. State residents please add sales tax. NYCY1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

curring in the marketplace between free and independent persons presumed to be rationally seeking their own advantage, can, in this respect, be exemplary. For each party may be enabled to benefit from the other in the free exchange of goods and services. . . .

Mr. Ryerson admits, however, that "capitalism is not enough," and that enlightened self-love does not provide capitalism with an adequate moral basis. But what that moral basis is, for him, is not wholly clear. Neither altruistic nor selfish, the capitalist ethos of autonomy and of "legitimate" self-interest is nevertheless presumed to be consistent with ethical norms. The deficiencies of egoism as an ethical theory of the desired kind are clear enough, though Mr. Ryerson does not make these explicit: egoism is only unproblematic if what is to one person's advantage coincides with what is to the advantage of all others. And the assumption that there is such a "preestablished harmony" in the world is a doubtful one. (Games theory has acquainted us with cases where individual self-seeking by each will demonstrably produce an inferior outcome for all; and in actual situations involving public goods, as, for example, public transportation, individually self-interested decisions can issue in a "cumulative irrationality"). . . .

The root of Mr. Ryerson's difficulty is his vacillation between egoism, or autonomy, and utilitarian considerations. There is, first of all, the factual (not ethical) claim that capitalism or market distributions and market methods of production and exchange will promote utilitarian goals, i.e., will maximize the common good. Each businessman tries to maximize personal success, hence business practice is egoistic. But it is also utilitarian in that advancing self-interest is thought to maximize the total good. Thus Mr. Ryerson declares that "we expect from the businessman the highest level of performance of which he is capable," *because* "that is what serves the greatest social good." At the same time he seems to think of autonomy as an ethical doctrine: the pursuit of self-interest is not merely a natural tendency, nor is it a factual claim about how the general good is to be attained, but a norm, behavior we morally ought to engage in. (On this account, an act of deception may be "rational" or "right" on self-interested grounds and quite the opposite on utilitarian grounds). . . . But the ethical egoist or autonomist cannot argue that each of us should promote his own greatest good because if we do this the greatest general good will result, for then he is no longer an egoist.

A final comment. Mr. Ryerson, like Michael Novak, sees capitalism as embedded in a pluralistic structure that includes the "moral-cultural sphere" as well as the political sphere of government. Now we might ask what kind of signals emanate from the moral sphere? Are these moral opinions or shared moral beliefs? If so, business decisions cannot ignore these any more than they can ignore the laws and customs of society. But as one writer concerned with corporate morality has observed, moral opinions and attitudes can be regarded in terms of their effectiveness in achieving business objectives, i.e., as empirical data to be taken into account on a par with the information that goes into cost-benefit computations. But if it is a *moral* basis of capitalism that we are after, such factual considerations do not function in our reasoning as ethical premises at all and morality as such is irrelevant (morality is concerned with objectives themselves).

I am uncertain whether Mr. Ryerson has fallen into either of these two traps: thinking that one can be at once an ethical egoist and a utilitarian, or mistaking factual premises for ethical ones. But these are points that should be settled before we attempt to underwrite a capitalist ethos with an ethics.

ROBERT ROSTHAL
University of North Carolina
Greensboro, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article, "Capitalism and Selfishness," André Ryerson acknowledges the importance of Ayn Rand, but his description of her views and his own attempt to provide an alternative prove faulty.

Mr. Ryerson confuses Ayn Rand with anarcho-libertarianism, despite the fact that even a cursory reading of her works reveals that she held the opposite view. She was an intransigent opponent of anarchism, insisting that government is the necessary means of protecting man's rights. She described anarchism as "the most irrational, anti-intellectual movement ever spun" by "the collectivist movement, where it properly belongs." And as an advocate of reason and objective morality, she scorned libertarians as "hippies of the Right," who "subordinate reason to whims." Contrary to Mr. Ryerson's claim, Ayn Rand has no anarcho-libertarian followers, because it is capitalism not anarchism that follows from her ethical philosophy.

Mr. Ryerson is equally misinformed in his claim that rational selfishness sanctions businessmen seeking special favors from the government. Contrary to Mr. Ryerson, looting, or sacrificing others to oneself, is not in anyone's rational self-interest. (See *Atlas Shrugged* for a dramatization of this point.) Contrary to Mr. Ryerson, the defense of the West against Soviet aggression is in men's rational self-interest. Contrary to Mr. Ryerson, self-interest means acting on *principle*, not grabbing whatever you want based on some feeling of the moment. For Ayn Rand, the standard of self-interest is not whim but "man's survival *qua* man," which means "the terms, methods, conditions, and goals required for the survival of a rational being through the whole of his life—in all those aspects of existence which are open to his choice."

Mr. Ryerson does seem to recognize one of Ayn Rand's major intellectual achievements: pointing out that the ethics of self-sacrifice is what leads to tyranny. However, he thinks that she goes too far and that he can provide a "middle ground" between selfishness and altruism. But his compromise term (an arbitrary usage of "self-interest") merely vacillates between the two opposing positions, as it must, because no compromise, no middle ground, is possible.

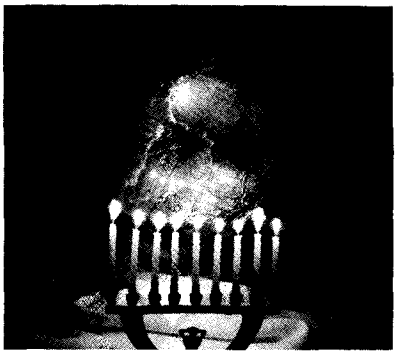
Injecting a little self-sacrifice into egoism does not "temper" egoism; it destroys egoism. Either one's life belongs to oneself or it does not.

In his attempt to "discipline" selfishness, Mr. Ryerson asserts that we have a duty to assist the poor. But any unchosen duty to others constitutes a rejection of the principle that one has a right to one's own life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. The slightest "disciplining" or compromising of the ethics of rational selfishness leads to increased government control and ultimately to tyranny. Just as there is no compromise between freedom and slavery, so there is no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Share Your Bread With The Hungry... Clothe The Naked And Never Hide Yourself From Those In Need.

-*Isaiah*



A great tradition of generosity toward poverty and pain stems from words such as these. It is in that spirit that The American Jewish World Service has been founded. Our purpose: To bring renewal and development to places where suffering is as predictable as noonday heat and early death is as common as the dirt under one's feet. Through the work of The American Jewish World Service, Jews can be a positive presence in the far corners of the earth. We are the first American Jewish organization devoted to nondenominational international aid and development.

RECONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA
A volcanic eruption destroyed the town of Armero and killed 22,000 inhabitants. The American Jewish World Service sponsors a project which employs 140 survivors to manufacture 10,000 bricks a day to reconstruct their town on a new, safe site.

SAVING GRAIN IN THE THIRD WORLD
25% to 30% of all harvested grain is lost because of an inadequate storage system. With our assistance, The Israeli Mobile Plastic Silo is being placed in Sri Lanka now and could vastly increase world food yield.

SAVING CHILDREN IN MEXICO
Forty children orphaned by earthquake are being cared for in a "Children's Village" which AJWS is constructing near Mexico City.

Now: A crisis has developed in the Philippine island of Negros.

THE PROBLEM: The feudal sugar industry has collapsed. More than 400,000 sugar workers are out of work with no way to feed their families. Protein calorie malnutrition is a daily threat on the island—especially among children.

Susan Meiselas/Magnum Photos

THE HOPE: The land on Negros is rich and being made available to people eager to work. What is needed are seed, tools and retraining for the planting of rice and corn.

Outside aid is essential to save the children of Negros in this emergency.

The American Jewish World Service as a moral and practical arm of the Jewish and American conscience is here to stay.

AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman
Lawrence S. Phillips
President
Laurence R. Simon

Donald M. Abramson
Lisa Belzberg
Georgette Bennett
Hyman Bookbinder
Rabbi Balfour Brickner
Doris Brickner
Lawrence Buttenwieser
Arthur G. Cohen
Sidney Elliot Cohn
Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson
Dean Carola Eisenberg, M.D.
Warren Eisenberg
Henry J. Everett
Leonard Fein
Rabbi Harvey Fields
Susan Fine
George Foos
Howard I. Friedman
Peter A. Geffen
Violet Gershenson
Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser
Arnold Glimcher
Victor Gotbaum
Rabbi Irving Greenberg
Caroline Harris
Henry Harris, M.D.
Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg
Henry Kaufman
Rabbi Wolfe Kelman
Philip M. Klutznick
Rabbi Benjamin Z. Kreitman
Norman Lear
Rabbi Henry Michelman
Ruth Schachter Morgenthau
Cynthia Ozick
Nathan Perlmutter
Ronald Pollack
Peter Rabinowitz
Mindy C. Reiser
Anne G. Roiphe
Myrna Ruskin
Jack Sheinkman
Henry Siegman
Ira Silverman
Robert Simon
Jack J. Spitzer
Daniel Stern
Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
Albert Vorspan
Herbert M. Weiss
Elie Wiesel
Congressional Advisory Committee
Hon. Howard L. Berman, California;
Hon. Sam Gejdenson, Connecticut;
Hon. Stephen J. Solarz, New York;
Hon. Henry A. Waxman, California;
Hon. Ted Weiss, New York

This is a unique opportunity to fulfill the Jewish tradition of repairing the world. One acre of rice will feed a family for 5 months.

AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE
29 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 101
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Yes, I want to help today.
☐ Plant one acre of rice $130
☐ Plant five acres $650
☐ Plant ten acres. $1,300
(and sustain more than 40 children.)
☐ Other . . . . . $____

Name _____
Add. _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

Tax-Deductible Contributions should be made payable to American Jewish World Service, Philippine Emergency.
29 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 101, Boston, MA 02116
With your contribution, we will send you additional information on the American Jewish World Service.

C 3/87

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

compromise between selfishness and self-sacrifice.

MICHAEL S. BERLINER
Executive Director
Ayn Rand Institute
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ayn Rand's ideas have unquestionably achieved a degree of popularity and influence, as André Ryerson notes. Yet discussions of her philosophy, Objectivism, remain few and infrequent. By publishing such a discussion, COMMENTARY has certainly burnished its reputation for open-mindedness. Nevertheless, I believe that Mr. Ryerson's portrait of Ayn Rand's thought requires some correction.

1. Mr. Ryerson calls Rand's concept of individualism "Nietzschean." In fact, Objectivist individualism is the opposite of Nietzschean:

> As an ethical-political concept, individualism upholds the supremacy of individual rights, the principle that man is an end in himself, not a means to the ends of others. . . . Too often, the ethical-political meaning of individualism is held to be: doing whatever one wishes, regardless of the rights of others. Writers such as Nietzsche and Max Stirner are sometimes quoted in support of this interpretation. . . . Individualism does not consist merely of rejecting the belief that man should live for the collective. A man who seeks escape from the responsibility of supporting his life by his own thought and effort, and wishes to survive by conquering, ruling, and exploiting others, is not an individualist (Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness*).

2. Mr. Ryerson says "Rand's libertarian followers" believe in "a bizarre sort of anarchism," in which "government . . . will be abolished" and everything including the justice system will be arranged "by private contracts alone." The phrase "Rand's libertarian followers" is an oxymoron, rather like "Judaism's Christian followers" or "Platonism's Aristotelian followers." In each case, a later movement emerged from an earlier. But that emergence involved a denial of the earlier movement's essence.

The theory Mr. Ryerson describes is libertarian, and is a variant of anarchism. It is called "competing governments," and Ayn Rand opposed it. "A recent variant of anarchistic theory, which is befuddling some of the younger advocates of freedom, is a weird absurdity called 'competing governments.' . . . One cannot call this theory a contradiction in terms, since it is obviously devoid of any understanding of the terms 'competition' and 'government' " (*The Virtue of Selfishness*).

3. Mr. Ryerson criticizes this libertarian fantasy by noting that, like the Marxist fantasy, it "comes quite simply from asking too much of economics." This is exactly Ayn Rand's criticism of it:

> Accepting the basic premise of the modern statists—who see no difference between the functions of government and the functions of industry, between force and production, . . . the proponents of "competing governments" take the other side of the same coin and declare that since competition is so beneficial to business, it should also be applied to government (*The Virtue of Selfishness*).

4. Mr. Ryerson also criticizes Rand's supposed anarchism by noting "the obvious impracticality of a modern society operating without a government." Here again from *The Virtue of Selfishness*:

> A society without an organized government would be at the mercy of the first criminal who came along and who would precipitate it into the chaos of gang warfare. But . . . even a society whose every member were fully rational and faultlessly moral, could not function in a state of anarchy: it is the need of *objective* laws and of an arbiter for honest disagreements among men that necessitates the establishment of a government.

5. Mr. Ryerson says: "One wonders, in fact, how much of the erosion of traditional concern . . . for defending the West can be attributed to [Rand's] influence." Of course, Rand did *not* believe in a weak government, only in a government limited in its purpose—and supreme among those legitimate purposes was national security. Moreover, like many of COMMENTARY's writers, Ayn Rand believed strongly in the lesson of Munich and its present applicability. "The ultimate result of appeasement is a world war, as demonstrated by World War II; in today's context, it may mean a nuclear world war" (*Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*).

6. Mr. Ryerson says that "the very ills which Randian libertarians deplore in the current state of things—such as businessmen avoiding competition and seeking special guildlike advantages for themselves or their industry—are themselves the products of a highly rational selfishness." This is a question of philosophical anthropology, and Mr. Ryerson is entitled to his view. But Objectivism explicitly considered and rejected the idea that guildlike protectionism and passivity could in any way serve the interests of a rational human self. . . .

7. Ironically, if Mr. Ryerson had read Ayn Rand more closely, he might have seen how near he is to paraphrasing her. For Mr. Ryerson's thesis is that "we need to transcend the easy opposition of selfishness and altruism and find some third or middle term to describe the ethos of capitalism." To do this, Mr. Ryerson comes up with three moral categories: selfishness (self-interested action that abuses the rights of others); autonomy (legitimate, self-interested action); and altruism (self-sacrificing action).

But this schema is virtually Ayn Rand's. Her moral categories were: selfishness (legitimate, self-interested action—Mr. Ryerson's autonomy); and sacrifice—(a) of others to oneself: Nietzscheanism (Mr. Ryerson's selfishness), and (b) of oneself to others: altruism (Mr. Ryerson's altruism).

ROGER DONWAY
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I wholeheartedly agree with André Ryerson's starting premise: without a moral defense, capitalism will not survive. Mr. Ryerson correctly summarizes Ayn Rand's view that altruism and self-sacrifice are incompatible with capitalism and lead to totalitarianism.

However, Mr. Ryerson ignores and distorts Ayn Rand's views of politics, views she derived logically from her ethics and outlined in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*. Only a religious ethic would consider "private" selfishness a prescription for amorality. Ayn Rand stood outside the Judeo-Christian tradition in defining her moral code. She held that man was the rational animal. She argued that rational self-interest required a government to protect men from force and fraud, at home or abroad. She agreed with the original American system, a constitutional republic.

Ayn Rand repeatedly attacked

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and rejected anarchism and libertarianism. Though libertarians borrow random ideas from her, they are not Objectivists, which is what her followers call themselves. The libertarians made every attempt in her lifetime to have her endorse them or join with them on any level. They continue to this day—fruitlessly—to try to obtain some endorsement from my husband, Leonard Peikoff, Ayn Rand's heir.

Ayn Rand defined an integrated philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. It is unpopular today to believe in the classical idea that philosophy must be an integrated system. This last was part of Ayn Rand's achievement, and this is why her views are taken out of context by the intellectuals of our age.

CYNTHIA PEIKOFF
South Laguna, California

ANDRÉ RYERSON writes:

George Gilder nicely clarifies and reduces the minor differences of interpretation between us on what makes capitalism a system of which its beneficiaries should be proud.

My preference for Adam Smith over Ayn Rand begins with the small fact that Smith came first and stated truths on which all economists of wit have had to stand and finishes with my admiration for the balance of Smith's overall vision (balance was not Ayn Rand's strong suit). Smith favored public works for tasks where private enterprise would find no profit, admitted the narrowing effects of factory work but advocated education for all to compensate for this, and saw no contradiction in defending impulses of human sympathy in one great book and the ethos of capitalist individualism in another.

Adam Smith's view of society approximated the model recently offered by Michael Novak with three spheres—the economic, the political, and the moral-cultural—each usefully acting upon the others. Mr. Gilder seems to want these categories blurred, and to perceive morality of a high order on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, beyond what I observe or find necessary. (I do not mind "cutthroat" bidding on an attractive stock issue.) Conversely, I do not see how the marketplace alone can teach the young about the beauty of art, the need for constitutional government, or why in an emergency young men should submit to the unpleasantness of military discipline, cease in certain respects to be individuals, and risk death on the battlefield to preserve a free society. That is why economic libertarians are often weak in theory when public or foreign-policy issues arise. These issues are simply of a different order from the norms of peaceful commerce.

I agree, however, with Mr. Gilder (and with Ayn Rand) on the creative, bold, and even courageous character of those who venture into uncharted waters, a respect we grant explorers but begrudge the men who invented and marketed the first printing press, electrical system, and mass-made car, individuals of genius who deserve better from academic chroniclers of Western civilization. Mr. Gilder's writing in this connection offers an excellent start for the remedial education of our elites. But their ignorance comes not from reading too much Adam Smith, but from failing to read him at all.

As to where religion belongs in our "integrated hierarchical theory of human life," this is a rather personal matter, and I certainly do not object to Mr. Gilder placing it "at the top," or even reproaching me for not putting "first things first." I confess to being something of a moral empiricist, and if a religion teaches human sacrifice, or the persecution of capitalists, or of Jews, I am inclined to challenge these practices from the standpoint of secular morality and common sense rather than by determining whether a scriptural text has been incorrectly interpreted. Religions vary, whereas the claim that capitalism permits society to prosper is an empirically provable fact, a secular truth that a Taiwanese Confucian, a Moroccan Muslim, a Russian Jew, a French atheist, and even possibly an American bishop should with modest effort be able to grasp.

Yet I think we understand each other. A free society is not one that is "free" of moral constraint, but the contrary. For as Tocqueville remarked concerning the ben-

WILL★BUCKLEY★KILPATRICK★HARVEY★SOBRAN★KIRKPATRICK
EVANS&NOVAK★RUSHER★HART★YODER★PODHORETZ★RABINOWITZ★LAMBRO
☆SHELTON☆DE ORE☆KELLEY☆WRIGHT☆LOCHER☆MAC NALLY☆STAYSKAL☆

It's an ALL-STAR conservative cast...
It's New★It's Weekly★It's RIGHT ON!

39 Issues only $23.95

NOW, every week receive a 32 page tabloid devoted to nationally-distributed newspaper columnists, with a **conservative appeal.** Most of them have every column published in full. Enjoy also, a witty selection from acclaimed cartoonists. Great reading, a handy reference. There's a **TOPIC INDEX** in every issue. Money-back guarantee.

Call TOLL-FREE or Return Coupon
800-558-1244
In Iowa and Alaska Call Collect 515-456-2585

Published by Chronicle Publications, a 110 year old independent newspaper company.

CONSERVATIVE CHRONICLE
Box 29 CA • Hampton, Iowa 50441

YES, I accept your Introductory Subscription Offer of 39 issues for $23.95. (Add $15 for foreign postage). I understand I can obtain a full refund on unused portion at any time.
Payment method:
☐ Bill Me ☐ Check ☐ Visa ☐ M.C. ☐ AMX
Card # _____ Exp. Date _____
Name _____
Street _____ Apt. No. _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efits of American Puritanism, only a high degree of private morality can foster an unprecedented freedom in economic and social relations, with minimal interference from the state. If private morals decline, the state increasingly finds reason to step in and take over from individuals. America has long been sustained by a moral capital that is not bottomless, and has its own "supply-side" requirements. Ayn Rand and her libertarian relatives, regrettably, by glorifying selfishness, treating with sarcasm the very idea of the "public good," and by defining capitalism in a manner to delight its enemies, have not added to that fund of moral capital, without which, Mr. Gilder and I seem to agree, free societies will break apart and suffer conquest by barbarians.

I appreciate Charles H. Chandler's remarks. He correctly cites the false dichotomies that socialists contrive to see in capitalism, which began when Marx claimed in Volume I of *Capital* that manufactured goods and money (like capital and labor) are "antagonistic forms," an assertion so absurd that only anti-business intellectuals could be expected to take it seriously.

Christopher C. Faille is puzzled that anyone should bother to inquire into the moral bases of capitalism, since pragmatism alone informs us that the system works extremely well. But Mr. Faille seems willing to dismiss what most humans cannot: some commitment to a moral life. At the least, he should be intellectually curious about a system that works well yet is routinely denounced by moralists and theologians as "scandalous." If they are correct, capitalism is a most peculiar phenomenon, like the squared circle or a perpetual-motion machine. But the most sophisticated analysts of democratic capitalism believe such critics are wrong, and believe it is important to show why. The reason is that moral perceptions are a powerful force among men, and if we allow the myth to stand that free societies are inherently immoral, we shall, sooner or later, lose our freedom. And that is a "pragmatic" issue about which even Mr. Faille, I suspect, is concerned. Far from divorcing morality and *praxis*, I sought to pursue the complexities of each, and to show that under democratic capitalism the two are made to operate in harmony.

Robert Rosthal notes my support of the dictum that "capitalism is not enough," but claims I do not offer the larger ethical basis that such a position assumes. I find the accusation odd, since I quoted the Bible, Hillel, Aristotle, Hume, and cited Luther and Adam Smith, all of whom held there to be no contradiction in their morality (whether Jewish, Greek, or Christian) between caring for the self and caring for others. We can do both. I do not see such a statement as "vacillation." Mr. Rosthal seems to have missed the central point of my article, which is to note the futility of radically opposing the interests of an individual and those of other lawful individuals in the society where he works and lives. Hence my solution to the old puzzle of egoism versus altruism is: to distinguish abusive egoism from non-abusive egoism; to condemn the first and sustain the second; and to preserve the injunction of traditional Western mores that we assist others where in need, and bear arms to defend the nation from attack, despite private sacrifices either duty must entail.

To the defenders of Ayn Rand published above—Michael S. Berliner, Roger Donway, and Cynthia Peikoff—and to the many others who wrote in her defense, making essentially the same arguments, I concede a minor point. It was not my project to analyze the philosophy of Ayn Rand, and my rather loose phrase, "the libertarian followers of Ayn Rand," was intended to cover the several splinter groups that worship private property as an absolute, as did Ayn Rand, leading them to accept her view that taxation, however modest, amounts to "robbery." The idea that citizens deserve the benefits of government, without suffering to pay taxes for them, would seem to be the Ayn Rand version of socialism (getting something for nothing). Its spirit of radical individualism is anarchistic, and the wilder libertarians have gone the further step of actually imagining the end of government.

Ayn Rand modestly proposed selling off all public property (including streets and highways) to private bidders and abolishing all taxation (lotteries and voluntary "contract insurance" would presumably suffice to pay public expenses). She wanted government preserved, but solely for stopping criminals, repelling foreign invaders, and enforcing contracts. Randians are therefore entitled to say that "anarcho-capitalists" are deviants who go beyond the strict program of the prophetess, and perhaps to bristle at my treating the two schools as one.

Closer to the substance of the article, Mr. Berliner complains that I am "equally misinformed" in my claim that rational selfishness sanctions businessmen seeking special favors from government, for (as he puts it) "looting, or sacrificing others to oneself, is not in anyone's rational self-interest." I disagree. It most certainly is in the rational self-interest of the looter, and all the more so when the profit gained by this device is legal. Here George Gilder and I stand together against the Randians: special favors sought from government by this or that business are driven by selfishness, by contempt for the common good, and are bad not because they fail to serve the selfishness of the beneficiary (which they obviously do), but because they distort fair conditions of business competition.

If Randians were more honest, many would confess their marginal regard for the common good, and concede that society has collective interests worth defending. Mr. Berliner almost does this when he states, "Contrary to Mr. Ryerson, the defense of the West against Soviet aggression is in men's rational self-interest." By saying that this is in *men's*, rather than in the individual's, self-interest, Mr. Berliner admits the group, or collective, nature of that interest. This is contrary to the Randian conceit that only solitary individuals exist, hence one can never formulate policy for the collective good of all. Although a wise society will seek to minimize the sacrifices that individuals must bear, it cannot survive without demanding some, the smallest being taxation, the largest being the risk of death on the battlefield. (I have never read a coherent account by Ayn Rand or her followers of how it can be in the "rational self-interest" of an individual to confront death on the battlefield so that others may reap the benefit and live in freedom. Only by moving closer to traditional Western morals will Randians grasp the necessity, at times, of such acts of bravery and sacrifice.)

Of Roger Donway's well-presented points, I have conceded some and refuted others. His seventh and last, however, is problematic. Flattered though I am to learn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kosher wine needn't be sweet just special

And special means Kedem. From world-renowned vineyards in France, Italy, California and New York. Rated and recommended by leading wine critics and editors, Kedem wines are superior to the world's great wines for one special reason, they're kosher.

KEDEM®

KOSHER PASSOVER WINES

KEDEM WINE CO., NEW YORK, N.Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that in proposing three basic moral categories, my "schema is virtually Ayn Rand's," I note that for once Mr. Donway's ability to quote his mentor fails him. The fact is that Ayn Rand was a glaring victim of the binary simplicities of the selfishness-versus-altruism model. She opted for selfishness, as we know, then tried to reshape the word to her taste. But the term is defined in all dictionaries as a concern for the self that abuses, or grossly ignores, the interests of others. Since such behavior is a fact of life, and is justly censured, I see no reason to subvert the definition, much less join in elevating a human weakness into a moral system.

The good in Ayn Rand, her love of creative individualism, can be saved by her admirers, in alliance with the larger community of the West, if they would simply recover their moral balance, grant their leader's fallibility, and concede that selfishness is bad, legitimate self-interest (or autonomy), is good, and personal sacrifice for the maintenance of free societies is necessary, and even, occasionally, noble.

Genocide

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his review of Robert Jay Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors* [Books in Review, December 1986], Daniel Jonah Goldhagen refers to "the other genocides" of our century and lists them: Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Paraguay, and the Soviet Union; nor does he forget the genocide of the Armenians in 1915-16.

But he does not mention the genocide that is going on *right now* in Afghanistan. He is not alone in overlooking it, for no one mentions it—not even Elie Wiesel, who has made the battle against genocide his lifework. . . .

Yet in the past seven years, more than one million Afghan civilians have died, out of a prewar population of perhaps fifteen million. Another five million have been driven from their homeland, and two million more are refugees inside their own country, forced from their homes by merciless attacks on civilian targets. The Soviets are methodically wiping out Afghan culture. Afghan history is being rewritten to erase any trace of what Arnold Toynbee has called one of the greatest centers of cultural interchange in the ancient world. The very bases of Afghan society and identity are being systematically attacked. By every definition, this is genocide.

Despite Soviet efforts to conceal it, what is going on in Afghanistan is known to the outside world. In the past two years, for example, there have been no fewer than four official reports of the UN Commission on Human Rights documenting the Afghan genocide. These have been supplemented by other, even more detailed, reports issued by private organizations in France, Norway, England, and the United States. Testimony in the West German Bundestag was televised last year. In fact, Commentary published an article five years ago ["Afghanistan—Another Cambodia?," by Michael Barry, August 1982] on the early stages of these atrocities, carried out by the Afghan puppet regime even before the Soviet army invaded.

Nevertheless, the genocide in Afghanistan is not only ignored by the public, it does not even seem to have made an impression on those who concern themselves with the problem. When genocide is discussed, the events mentioned are always those of the past; and indeed, it is commonly lamented that the world could do nothing about earlier genocides because the facts about them were not known until it was too late. Yet here is genocide going on—and *known to be going on*—and there is still silence.

The churches and their leaders are silent, as are the spokesmen of most established humanitarian organizations. The universities are silent. Governments make perfunctory gestures. And even those who devote themselves to the question of genocide, and who constantly call for vigilance to prevent it from happening again, are silent. . . .

Why? Why do those who insistently remember the dead and mourn them refuse to raise their voices on behalf of the living who are now facing slaughter? Why don't they at least try to save them?

Over and over during the past forty years, scholars and laymen alike have tried to fathom the mystery of the world's silence during the Holocaust. Volumes have been written trying to understand how it could have happened; popes and presidents, the American Jewish community, and the entire world have been accused of every motivation from moral blindness to political pandering in their silent complicity with evil. . . .

But instead of studying the past for an answer to how the world could have remained silent during the genocides of seventy years ago, forty years ago, a dozen years ago, we should look at our own silence today. This time we cannot claim we do not know what is happening. . . . The silence of the past is now our silence.

Rosanne Klass

New York City

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen writes:

Given that Rosanne Klass is responding to a review of a book on Nazi doctors, her criticism of me for neglecting Soviet behavior in Afghanistan seems out of place. Miss Klass implies, by quoting out of context, that the genocides I cited were meant to constitute an exhaustive list of 20th-century genocides. In fact, as the review clearly states, these genocides are the ones which Lifton sees as conforming to his model of genocide. It is only in this context that I adduced them.

Team B

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "Team B: The Reality Behind the Myth" [October 1986], Richard Pipes gives the impression that in 1976 the U.S. intelligence community drastically revised its estimate of Soviet strategic objectives as a consequence of the competitive analysis presented by him and his team of outside authorities. This same impression was conveyed in press reporting about the Team B experiment at the time. However, as the Senate Intelligence Committee pointed out in the summary report of its inquiry into the Team B episode, the view that U.S. intelligence had suddenly reversed its estimate is not correct.

What actually happened was that in succeeding annual estimates during the mid-70's, the intelligence community expressed growing concern about Soviet strategic nuclear objectives and prospective capabilities. The primary reason for this trend was mounting evidence of the continuing broad scope and determined pace of Soviet strategic offensive and defensive force-improvement programs, despite the advent of U.S.-Soviet strategic arms-limitation agreements and détente in 1972. Some of the adjustments made in the 1976 estimate did in fact respond to valid points made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by the three B Teams (Mr. Pipes was chairman of the team which dealt with Soviet strategic objectives), but the estimators did not simply adopt their views, some of which were quite extreme.

Like Mr. Pipes, I think today's estimates on these subjects are better than those over which I presided when I was the responsible national-intelligence officer. Among other things, more emphasis is now placed on Soviet military doctrine and on the operational practices of Soviet strategic forces, and for this the B Teams deserve some of the credit. Also, outside consultants are now used more widely during the preparation of estimates, though their role is that of advisers rather than competitors and they are selected to represent a broader range of viewpoints than the B Teams of 1976.

Mr. Pipes implies that until his Team B came along, there was some kind of official consensus or conformity of view in the intelligence community that nobody dared break. On the contrary, the right and duty to register dissenting or alternative views in National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's) was and remains a time-honored tradition, understood and exercised by the representatives of the various U.S. intelligence agencies since at least as far back as the 1950's. Indeed, from my point of view, one of the negative aspects of the Team B experiment was that it focused so heavily on differences that it tended to obscure the large and important areas of agreement among U.S. intelligence authorities about the threat.

In his article, Mr. Pipes makes it plain that he considers his interpretation of Soviet strategic policy, and of the requirements of deterrence, to represent the only realistic interpretation. He warns against those in the U.S. who cling to illusion or may revert to it. To aid U.S. policy-makers in the long-term competition with the Soviet Union, it would certainly be ideal if every intelligence judgment and forecast about the adversary were in full accord with reality and could stand the test of time. But this ideal is clearly too much to expect in an uncertain and changing world. It seems to me, for example, that Soviet behavior since 1977 casts doubt on Mr. Pipes's own conclusion, published in COMMENTARY that year, "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight & Win a Nuclear War" [July 1977].

Given the inherent difficulty in making judgments and forecasts, therefore, good practice in estimating includes readiness to make modifications whenever new evidence or analysis warrants it. From long association, I know that my successor estimators continue to follow this practice. And I am confident that they seek to reflect the available evidence and analysis regardless of whether this results in more or less somber assessments of Soviet policies and capabilities.

HOWARD STOERTZ, JR.
Herndon, Virginia

RICHARD PIPES writes:

I believe that a comparison of the original draft of the NIE for 1977 with that finally submitted by the CIA will bear out my contention that it was drastically revised after it had been criticized by Team B. Such a comparison, unfortunately, will not be possible until after the relevant documents have been declassified.

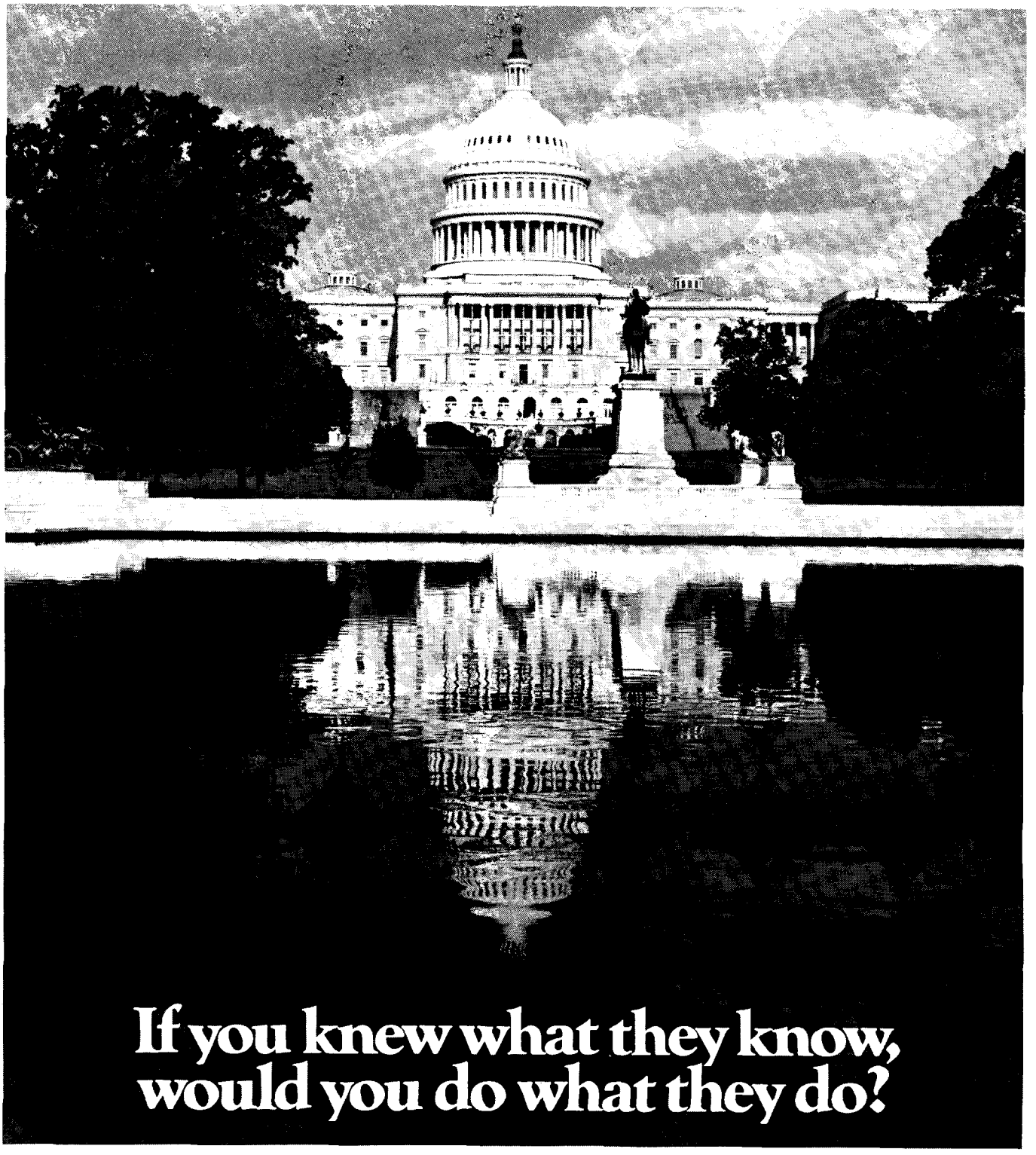
As I stated in my article, the NIE's did allow dissenting opinions, but they almost invariably relegated them to the footnotes. They did not affect the thrust of the estimate.

I do not know on what evidence Mr. Stoertz bases his opinion that "Soviet behavior since 1977" has cast doubts on my contention that the Soviet Union thinks it could fight and win a nuclear war. True, boasts of this nature, routinely published in Soviet military literature during the 1960's and early 1970's, have been muted, in large measure because the publicity given to Team B has made the leadership of the Soviet Union aware of what harm they were doing to its image abroad (it was immediately after the Team B story had broken, in January 1977, that Brezhnev first proclaimed nuclear war "unwinnable"). But nothing in the Soviet nuclear build-up since 1977 allows us to believe that the Soviet Union seeks nothing beyond parity and views its strategic arsenal as serving exclusively deterrent purposes.

Correction

The Halakhic Mind: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought, by Joseph B. Soloveitchik, which was reviewed by David Singer in our January issue, was co-published by the Free Press and Seth Press—ED.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



If you knew what they know, would you do what they do?

More than any other single force on earth, America's foreign policy will determine what kind of world we and our children live in.

And every one of us can influence that policy. That's what the nonprofit, nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association is all about: working to develop the kind of informed public opinion that will help our government make enlightened, responsible foreign policy decisions.

Last year alone, more than 250,000 Americans across the nation—in discussion groups, classrooms and community centers—participated in our *Great Decisions* program.

The *Great Decisions* book provides objective background on eight key foreign policy issues. Discussions help you form your views; you express them on opinion ballots, which FPA presents to Washington officials.

FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION 1918

To find out more, call us now at (212) 481-8450. Or write to Foreign Policy Association, Department A, 205 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Donations are fully tax deductible.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

World War I, World War II, World War III

Donald Kagan

World War II dominated the imagination of most people who lived through it. For decades afterward most Americans looked at world affairs through the lens ground to fit the vision they had of the 1930's and the broad consensus as to what it revealed: the world had suffered a terrible war needlessly. The irresolution, timidity, division, and lack of resolve of the democracies had allowed aggressive and evil regimes in Italy, Japan, and especially Germany to grow so powerful as to threaten the freedom of the rest of the world. It had required a horrible and bloody war to put them down, whereas a determined collective effort could have deterred the aggressors or, at any rate, have defeated them quickly and without great cost had the democracies acted firmly soon enough. Weak and indecisive leaders had yielded to the natural tendency of democracies in peacetime, recklessly cutting defense expenditures, closing their eyes to unpleasant realities when ugly and dangerous governments came to power in restless and dissatisfied nations, turning to the fruitless and humiliating policy of appeasement when the bullies could no longer be ignored. Those policies were rejected and reversed only at the last minute, too late to save the European continent west of the Soviet Union and barely soon enough to save Britain and gain time for the power of the USSR and the United States to turn the tide.

These ideas were all summed up in the word "Munich," and the determination that there should be no more Munichs lay behind most of the actions of the Western democracies, and especially the United States, in the years after the war. American isolationism had weakened the capacity of the democracies to resist aggression, so President Roosevelt was determined that the United States must play an active part in the new international organization, the United Nations. When the Soviet Union and Communism came to seem dangerous, the analogy of the 1930's quickly came to mind and helped lead the Western states to unite in NATO, a serious military alliance capable of resisting aggression. The Munich analogy was foremost in the minds of President Truman and his advisers when they decided to resist the threat they perceived from Communism and the Soviet Union that led them to establish the Marshall Plan, set forth the Truman Doctrine, and join the NATO alliance.

During the Johnson years, however, as a result of the unpopularity in academic circles of the Vietnam war, the historical analogy of the 1930's with recent events, whose validity, indeed primacy, had not previously been questioned except by apologists for the Soviet Union, came under attack even from liberals with impeccable anti-Communist credentials. For many American and British intellectuals it is now being replaced by a surge of analogies with the coming of the great war which broke out after the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated at Sarajevo in June of 1914.*

This reexamination of World War I has invariably produced lessons for our own time quite different from those that came from scrutinizing World War II. The proponents of what we may call the "Sarajevo" analogy are not much impressed with the importance of vigilance, preparedness, swift and determined responses to aggressive actions, with the need for firmness in the face of provocation. Instead they urge greater caution, a willingness to bargain, avoidance of attempts to undermine the strength of rival states, a more generous reading of their intentions, a greater willingness to understand the point of view of nations late in coming to power on the world scene.

Donald Kagan is Richard M. Colgate Professor of History and Classics at Yale and the author of *The Great Dialogue: A History of Greek Political Thought*. Mr. Kagan has just completed *The Fall of the Athenian Empire*, the fourth and final volume of his history of the Peloponnesian War (Cornell University Press).

* See, for example, Miles Kahler, "Rumors of War: The 1914 Analogy," *Foreign Affairs*, December 1979, and an entire issue of the journal *International Security* devoted to deriving contemporary lessons from the war of 1914, published separately as *Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War*, Steven E. Miller, ed. (Princeton University Press, 1985). See also Geoffrey Barraclough, *From Agadir to Armageddon* (Holmes & Meier, 1982); Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars* (Harvard University Press, 1983); George F. Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order* (Princeton University Press, 1979) and *The Fateful Alliance* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

THE two cases, "Munich" and "Sarajevo," are indeed different in many respects, yet it is far from clear that the lessons derived from them must be at odds.

The central assumptions that underlie the lessons emphasized by those we might call the neo-revisionists, though they rarely state them directly, are that Wilhelmine Germany, the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II, was not really dangerous and that its actions in the two decades before the outbreak of the Great War of 1914 did not require the strong reaction they received from Britain; Germany's intentions were not unappeasably aggressive, and it had no clear goals that were incompatible with Britain's security. A recent formulation of this view goes even farther, finding fault not with German aggressiveness but with the reaction to it:

> Geography and history conspired to make Germany's rise late, rapid, vulnerable, and aggressive. The rest of the world reacted by crushing the upstart. If, in the process, the German state lost its bearings and was possessed by an evil demon, perhaps the proper conclusion is not so much that civilization was uniquely weak in Germany, but that it is so fragile everywhere. And *perhaps the proper lesson is not so much the need for vigilance against aggressors, but the ruinous consequences of refusing reasonable accommodation to upstarts.**

The question is, what "accommodation" could the European states have made to the German "upstart" that would have brought satisfaction to Germany and stability to Europe? What, in fact, did Germany want? At the turn of the century Germany was the strongest military power in the world. It also had the strongest and most dynamic economy on the continent. In 1897, without any previous naval tradition, without any new challenge from the sea to justify an expensive change in policy, the Germans undertook the construction of a major battle fleet concentrated in the North Sea where it could threaten traditional English naval superiority and the security that went with it. The British gradually became alarmed as they came to recognize the threat Germany might pose.

In the Foreign Office, Eyre Crowe, the resident expert on Germany, suggested that the Germans might be "aiming at a general political hegemony and maritime ascendancy, threatening the independence of her neighbors and ultimately the existence of England." Concern over German intentions had already caused Britain to abandon its policy of isolation and enter into a series of understandings and alliances with other countries. Repeated statements by the German emperor and many other leaders in and outside the government asserted that Germany was aiming at "world power," that it demanded overseas colonies and "a place in the sun," that "no question of world politics must be settled without the consent of the German emperor."

Such statements might be dismissed as mere bombast or only the ebullience of a newly powerful nation, late in arriving at a place among the great powers, flexing its muscles and understandably asserting its right to equal treatment, but German actions made them seem a good deal less harmless. In the two Moroccan crises of 1905 and 1911 the Germans tried to bully France, make colonial gains, and break the link between France and Britain. Even more menacingly, the Germans continued to build big battleships in numbers that would destroy the security of Britain unless the British were willing to divert vast sums from domestic purposes to hold up their side in a naval race. All this converted the Liberal British government, whose Foreign Minister was Sir Edward Grey, to Crowe's dark view of German intentions.

To be sure, the Liberal leaders' policy of resistance to the German threat met criticism from radicals and pacifists both inside and outside the government and the party. Some claimed that Germany really presented no danger at all; fear of war was being stirred up by militarists and the arms manufacturers, the "merchants of death" who were their associates. Others argued that the British fleet was strong enough, in any case, to meet whatever challenge it might face and that no acceleration in the pace of production was needed. Even such hard-headed politicians as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill opposed increased naval expenditures because they would interfere with the domestic-welfare program to which the Liberal party was committed and which they were eager to bring about. Norman Angell wrote a book called *The Great Illusion* which argued that war was not only immoral but, in the modern world of interdependent economies, irrational and almost impossible. From such a perspective, joining in an arms race to deter a war would likewise be irrational. In spite of this opposition, the British competed in and won the naval race; they also maintained and strengthened their ties with their former enemies France and Russia because they feared the growth of the German navy and the uses to which it might be put.

Even on the evidence available to Crowe, Grey, and their colleagues their fears were well-founded. However often the Kaiser might proclaim his and Germany's friendly feelings for England, and Admiral Tirpitz, his Naval Secretary, declare that the fleet was intended only to defend Germany, its colonies and commerce, the emphasis on big battleships, the concentration of the fleet in the North Sea, and the accelerating pace of construction justified British suspicion and fear, even without inside information about Germany's mo-

* David Calleo, *The German Problem Reconsidered* (Harvard University Press, 1978). The words I have emphasized are quoted by Kahler.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tives. Recent scholarship, moreover, makes clear that Britain really was the target of the new German navy. It also shows that the likeliest explanation of Tirpitz's otherwise irrational naval program is that it aimed at least at equality with the British fleet* and, when combined with Germany's great military power, would give Germany the ability to change the status quo in its favor and to the great and dangerous disadvantage of other powers, particularly Great Britain. It would be some years before the Germans could hope to approach parity at sea, but the British expected that even before the Germans were prepared for such a confrontation, they would use their "risk fleet" to secure concessions.

WHAT concessions would they demand? Were these reasonable enough to permit Britain to make them without endangering British security? Would an attempt to understand the feelings and needs of the new German empire and to meet them have averted conflict? What, in fact, were Germany's goals? The contemporary German historian Fritz Fischer believes that the Germans wanted to conquer and dominate the European continent from the English Channel to the Ukraine, to exploit its economic resources and use it as a base for a world empire. His main evidence is the program of war aims they drew up soon after the war broke out in 1914, the "September Program," which spells out the European part of such a plan. Fischer argues that Germany planned and unleashed the war precisely to achieve its purposes.

We need not accept this entirely to believe that at least something of what the Germans hoped for before the war is reflected in the plans approved by the German Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, only a month after it began. The central principle of those plans was "the safeguarding of the German empire for the foreseeable future in the East and West. Hence, France must be so weakened that it cannot rise again as a great power. Russia must be pushed back from the German frontier as far as possible, and its rule over the non-Russian vassal peoples must be broken."

Since victory in the West seemed imminent, while the situation in the East was still unclear, the bulk of the September Program dealt with the West. The military would decide whether the French should cede Belfort, the western slopes of the Vosges, the coast from Dunkirk to Boulogne, and destroy their forts on the German frontier; the military at once decided they should. Germany would acquire the iron mines of Briey. A preferential trade treaty would make France "our export land," and the French would be required to pay an indemnity that would make it impossible for them to manufacture armaments for at least twenty years. Belgium would lose Liège, Verviers, and probably Antwerp, and would become a vassal state, accepting German garrisons in its ports. To this Belgian subsidiary of Germany would be attached French Flanders, and the channel ports of Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne. Holland would be ostensibly independent, "but essentially subject to us." Luxembourg would be incorporated directly into the German empire. Apart from these territorial provisions, but by no means less important, was the plan for establishing "an economic organization of *Mitteleuropa* through mutual customs agreements . . . including France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Austria, Poland, and perhaps Italy, Sweden, and Norway," that would guarantee German economic domination of Europe.

Plans for the East were not yet formulated so early, but what we know of ideas that were entertained shows that they led naturally to the settlement imposed on the new Bolshevik government of Russia by the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918. That treaty deprived Russia of Poland, Finland, the Baltic states, the Ukraine, and parts of the Caucasus. Though the treaty contained language about self-determination, there can be no doubt that all these lands would be under German control, one way or another.

We should remember that Bethmann Hollweg was a moderate in the context of Wilhelmine Germany and that his program fell far short of the wishes not only of right-wing extremists, both civilian and military, but even of most intellectuals and political moderates. A "Petition of Intellectuals" published in July 1915 was signed by a great number of theologians, teachers, artists, writers, and some 352 university professors; it demanded a program of annexations that went far beyond the September Program. At the same time that Bethmann Hollweg was approving his own scheme, the leader of the Catholic Center party, Matthias Erzberger, was demanding the annexation of Belgium, parts of France, and the entire Congo, the conversion of the Baltic states and the Ukraine into German dependencies, and the imposition of a reparations bill that would more than pay off the entire German national debt.

The course of the war showed that the Chancellor would have had to yield to more extreme opinions or make way for more extreme leaders. The chances are that a victorious Germany would have claimed more than was contained in the September Program and at least as much as was set down at Brest-Litovsk. In that event, Britain would have been faced with the destruction of the balance of power it had fought so long to maintain on the continent and its domination by a

* See Paul M. Kennedy, "Strategic Aspects of the Anglo-German Naval Race," in Paul M. Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy* 1870-1945 (London, Allen & Unwin, 1983), and the judgment of that article and other recent studies coming to a similar conclusion by Zara S. Steiner: "We now know that Tirpitz did indeed think of challenging the supremacy of the British navy," in *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London, Macmillan, 1977).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

single power. The new master of Europe, moreover, would be far stronger and more dangerous than the Spain of Philip II or the France of Louis XIV. It would have the greatest army the world had ever seen, unprecedented economic resources with which to make its already significant navy, now able to operate from a series of channel ports, stronger than the British fleet, and reserves of manpower the British could not hope to match. The new Germany would have the power to exclude British trade from the continent, doing fearful damage to the British economy. If necessary it could even be capable of invading and subjugating the British Isles.

It is hard to see how the British could have regarded such an outcome as an acceptable "accommodation," yet we have no evidentiary basis for believing that the Germans would have been satisfied with anything else.

The scholarship of the last quarter-century, almost completely ignored by the neorevisionists,* makes it clear that Wilhelmine Germany was not just another European nation seeking to maintain its national interest or even to advance it by means tolerable to its neighbors. From the late 1890's imperial Germany was a fundamentally dissatisfied power, eager to disrupt the status quo and to achieve its expansive goals, by bullying if possible, by war if necessary.

It might be argued that these grandiose aims, clear evidence for which only appears after the outbreak of war, grew and developed only after a long period of frustration and cold war, as a result of British intransigence. If the British had been more forthcoming earlier, some might say, a settlement could have been reached on more acceptable terms. The historical record will not support any such claim. As a keen student of the subject, Paul M. Kennedy, puts it:

> The historian aware of the pressures for expansion in imperial Germany is bound to wonder whether a change of tone on Britain's part, a greater generosity over this or that colonial boundary, would really have had a significant difference. They might have papered over the cracks in the Anglo-German relationship for a few more years, but it is difficult to see how such gestures would have altered the elemental German push to change the existing distribution of power—which, unless the British were willing to accept a substantial diminution in national influence and safety, was bound to provoke a reaction on their part.

III

But perhaps we should try applying another analogy to the outbreak of World War I, namely the one that arises from the study of "Munich." Is it possible that the coming of the Great War of 1914 might have been averted had the British been not more conciliatory but more hard-headed, more realistic and determined?

Such suggestions and the criticism they imply did not need to wait for the lessons of the 1930's to be learned. No sooner had war broken out in 1914 than the charge was leveled at the British government, and especially at Lord Grey, that the British might have deterred the Germans from launching the war if they had made formal and open military alliances with France and Russia instead of depending on non-binding agreements and understandings, and if Grey had made Britain's support of those nations clearer and less equivocal during the crisis. But the evidence does not justify such claims, either. Britain and Grey made their position clear enough for anyone who chose not to avert his eyes. British War Secretary Haldane had made it plain that Britain would stand by France in case of attack by Germany as early as 1912, and the news sent the Kaiser into a tantrum. The mutually dependent dispositions of the British and French fleets made it even more obvious that Britain could not abandon France. The German ambassador during the crisis of July 1914 repeatedly and correctly informed Berlin of Britain's intentions. Finally, Britain's guarantee of Belgium went back to 1839, so the Germans had no reason to hope that Britain would stand aside when they invaded Belgium, as they would have to do according to the Schlieffen Plan, which called for a massive attack on France from the north through Belgium and Holland. Though British diplomacy could have been clearer and more firm, there is no reason to believe that the war came because of a German misperception of British intentions.

Some of the lessons of "Munich," however, do seem appropriate to the situation in 1914, for in retrospect the British appear to have failed to take some of the actions and to make some of the sacrifices that might have deterred the war. Strengthening the fleet and making new friends were not enough to stop the Germans from trying to change the world balance in their favor, even if it meant war, because neither action nor both of them together guaranteed the defeat of Germany's plan for a quick victory in a land war in the West followed by another swift victory on land against Russia. The British fleet could do nothing to prevent such victories, and any blockade it might impose would have no effect on a Germany that controlled the resources of all of Europe. The only thing that could be counted on to deter any German leader who was not insane was the certainty of the presence on the western front, soon

* See S.M. Lynn-Jones, "Détente and Deterrence, Anglo-German Relations, 1911-1914," *International Relations*, Fall 1986: "One of the most striking features of the general image of World War I as an inadvertent conflict is the extent to which it ignores the arguments of Fritz Fischer and other historians who contend that Germany adopted an aggressive policy."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after the outbreak of war, of an army large enough to make a German breakthrough and a quick victory impossible, an army of such a size as the British ultimately put into the field, too late to deter war but just in time to avoid defeat.

The British, of course, had long opposed maintaining a large army in peacetime and refused to recruit their small regular armed forces by conscription, as the continental powers did. The Germans had long known the significance of Britain's military impotence. They knew that the British army was a small volunteer force meant to serve as a colonial police force and not intended for continental service. The fact that the British had no conscription, unlike the European powers, also meant that they had no trained reserve that could quickly be brought to bear on the western front. Schlieffen, therefore, thought it safe to ignore Britain's army in his strategic calculations, and such thinking certainly continued after his death. That is what explains Germany's willingness to go forward even after it was clear that Britain would fight.

Suppose, however, that the British had looked at their predicament clearly, honestly, and courageously in the years between 1898 and 1914. Suppose, knowing the Schlieffen Plan's essentials, as everyone did, they had faced the fact that only the assurance of a large, well-trained British army that could quickly come to France's aid in case of attack could make a German victory in the West impossible and obviously so. Suppose they had swallowed the bitter pill of introducing conscription, and in time of peace, at that. It would have meant going against an honored and comfortable tradition; it would have been costly and strained the British economy at a time when there was great pressure for domestic spending; it would have been at odds with the great libertarian ethic central to the British character—but the result would have been the presence of a standing army and a large trained reserve in 1914. That would have made the Schlieffen Plan or any conceivable German plan of war obviously absurd and certain to fail. Whatever Germany's ambitions and frustrations, such a course of action would have forced Germany to abandon its reckless and unnecessary challenge to the stability of Europe with untold benefit to itself and the world. However painful such sacrifices might be, they could have spared Britain four terrible years of war, horrendous casualties, and the rapid loss of its place in the world.

IV

The chief lesson that emerges from seeing the outbreak of World War I from this perspective is not the one learned by the new revisionists. It was not the unwillingness of the British to make reasonable concessions to a new competitor for power and prestige that allowed the war to come, but their refusal to pay the high price of deterring an ambitious opponent committed to changing the balance of power to their disadvantage and danger.

The single analogy and the lessons deriving from it that dominated the minds of British leaders in the years between the wars, however, was quite different, one created by the first wave of revisionists. For them the Great War and the terrible destruction that came from it were caused by the arms race, the alliance system, and the willingness of Britain to commit a land army of significant size to a war on the continent. British leaders were easily persuaded that the Western allies had been at least as responsible as the Germans for the war, that the arms race, stirred up by munitions makers and their associates, had been a major cause of bringing it on, that greater understanding, more generosity, and patience were better ways to avoid war than military deterrence. The result was the policy of appeasement, "Munich," and World War II.

The story of these developments, though it dominated the thinking of an earlier generation, is not well known to that generation's children, yet it remains important.

Deeply impressed by the ideas of the revisionists, the Western democracies, and especially the British, failed to react to the menace created by German ambitions between the wars even to the extent they had done before 1914. The role of Great Britain was more crucial in the later period because French power and will had been so reduced by the terrible experience of World War I as to lead French statesmen to look to the British for leadership. The British had suffered much less than the French, but their losses in men, wealth, and relative position in the world, their vivid memories of the horrors of the last war, and their belief that the introduction of aerial bombardment would make another war even more terrible, sapped the resolve of many British leaders. They were determined to avoid another continental war at any cost. They vaguely put their hopes for peace in international organizations such as the League of Nations, though no nation abandoned any sovereignty, and the League had no armed forces. In its first real test the League failed even to impose effective economic sanctions to prevent Italy's conquest of Ethiopia in 1935. British support of sanctions was half-hearted, and the incident proved the emptiness of the concept of "collective security," which was not backed by the will and the means to resist aggression.

The only remaining devices for deterring aggression and war were the traditional ones of armed strength and effective military alliances, but to the British leaders the analogy of 1914 made such ideas anathema. They regarded with suspicion and hostility all French attempts to prevent the resurgence of German power in the 1920's, making ever clearer their desire to remain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aloof from continental entanglements. Though they retained a strong navy, they allowed their army to sink to a level of total incapacity to wage a major war; they did not, of course, continue military conscription. They made their greatest effort in air power, but even there they did not build an air force strong enough to deter or win a future war.

Pacifism, isolationism, and other forms of wishful thinking were widespread in Britain and contributed to the mood favoring disarmament and concessions. The idea of maintaining peace through strength was not in fashion. Under Stanley Baldwin the British government was sympathetic to German claims of unfair treatment in the peace treaty and prepared to be reasonable in changing its provisions, even at the expense of the security of some of the new European states. When Hitler renounced the disarmament clauses of existing treaties, withdrew from the disarmament conference and the League of Nations, and launched a great program of rearmament, Britain took no action, nor was there a shortage of English defenders of what Germany had done.

A significant element in explaining British behavior throughout this period was the general belief that the new weapon of aerial bombardment was irresistible: "The man in the street must realize," said Prime Minister Baldwin, that "the bomber will always get through." No defense was possible. "When the next war comes . . . European civilization [will be] wiped out. . . ." Winston Churchill and a few others drew the conclusion that the way to avoid this terrible prospect was for the Western democracies to rearm to such an extent as to deter the discontented fascist powers from risking war, but they were isolated and ignored. When one of them told an electoral meeting in 1933 that "Germany was preparing for war on a scale and with an enthusiasm unmatched in history," a hostile crowd shouted him down until the police could restore order. During the same year the young gentlemen of the Oxford Union voted by a large majority "That this house will in no circumstances fight for its King or country."

THOUGH not themselves pacifists, Britain's leaders had done much to encourage such behavior and, in turn, used it to justify their policy of disarmament and conciliation even while the dictators increased their armaments and threats to the security of Europe. In March of 1936 Hitler sent an armed force into the Rhineland. This was a breach of the treaties of Versailles and Locarno, a clear violation of international law. If allowed to stand, moreover, the remilitarization of the Rhineland would alter the strategic situation and balance of power in Europe at a stroke. It would drastically reduce France's security against an attack from Germany and make it much more difficult for France to threaten Germany from the West. This, in turn, would undermine France's capacity to honor the treaties defending Czechoslovakia, Poland, and other states of Eastern Europe if they were attacked by Germany. The entire postwar settlement would be put in question. Assuming that France, at least, could not tolerate such an action, Poland offered its military assistance. The French and Polish armies alone greatly outnumbered Hitler's forces, and German rearmament had only begun to show results. Hitler himself later said: "The forty-eight hours after the march into the Rhineland were the most nerve-racking in my life. If the French had then marched into the Rhineland we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs, for the military resources at our disposal would have been wholly inadequate for even a moderate resistance." Nevertheless, neither the French nor the British were willing to take any military action, and the British squelched the French proposal even for economic sanctions.

Why did the Western democracies permit so serious a development? If many Englishmen chose to see Hitler's remilitarization, in the words of Lord Lothian, merely as his entering his own "back-garden," few Frenchmen took that view. The French, however, in spite of their material superiority, were unable to take the offensive, even against the miserable division Hitler sent into the Rhineland. They were psychologically crippled by the memory of the slaughters of 1914-18 when excessive reliance on the offensive had led to disaster. French military and political leaders were dominated by only that one historical analogy. They built the Maginot Line and tried to hide behind it, though it was incomplete and provided an inadequate defense. Their war plans, such as they were, contained no thought of taking the offensive.

Had the French and the British between the wars examined their political and strategic situation objectively and realistically they would have seen that an offensive element was essential to their very defensive goals of maintaining peace and the security of the new Europe. There was no point in feeling guilty about what they had done to Germany at the peace conference. If the peace was unjust they should change its terms willingly, without compulsion, but what changes would satisfy Germany? Only those made at the expense of the new nations of Eastern Europe established on the high principle of national self-determination and the lower one of security for France against a revived and far more powerful Germany. Even a reasonable German nationalist like Gustav Stresemann sought changes unacceptable to the successor states. Hitler had repeated many times in speech and writing that he wanted the new nations obliterated. Changes such as the Germans sought were not possible without abandoning both principles.

The Western democracies, therefore, had no choice but to defend the status quo against all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but minor revisions unless they were prepared to abandon all principle and all security. Once they faced that hard fact they would see that the easiest, cheapest, and safest way to accomplish that end was to keep the Germans effectively disarmed for the foreseeable future. Failing that, they must keep the Rhineland demilitarized and be prepared to launch an attack through it if the Germans attacked the Eastern states. Whatever its faults, such a program would have been operationally easy and inexpensive, it would have protected the security of Britain, France, and the successor states, and it would have avoided a major war.

Such a program was not undertaken because the Western leaders, and many of their people, did not examine their situation objectively and realistically but emotionally and hopefully. They were moved by the horror of war, the fear of its reappearance, and the blind hope that a refusal to contemplate war and prepare for it, combined with an attitude of conciliation and generosity toward the beaten foe, never mind at what cost to its potential victims, would somehow keep the peace. The one lesson they learned from their complete focus on the one most recent analogy was to avoid the "mistakes" they believed had caused the previous war.

Of no leader was this more true than the man who had the greatest control of British policy during the crucial years of the late 1930's, Neville Chamberlain. A recent examination of Chamberlain's performance makes this very clear:

> At the public level, Chamberlain was like most of his contemporaries, profoundly affected by World War I, and he later entered politics with the conviction that, above all else, the mistakes of the past must not be repeated. So powerful were these historical memories that in 1938 at Munich, and in the months that followed, it was almost as if Chamberlain saw not Hitler and his unique threat to the peace of Europe, but rather the Kaiser of 1914 repeating the same disastrous mistakes which had led to the "Great War."
>
> Chamberlain believed that the alternative to coming to terms with Hitler would be another world war, infinitely more devastating than the last, and that therefore almost any act of political accommodation was fully justified, not only justified, but indeed the only conceivable course of moral action. It was these considerations rather than a belief that the Treaty of Versailles ought to be revised, or an appreciation of British weakness, or the need for domestic political unity, which were in the end decisive. As a result, Britain backed resolutely into war with Germany with her eyes focused doggedly on the past.*

Such attitudes were at least understandable while Germany was ostensibly disarmed and led by the divided, weak, and relatively unpopular governments of the Weimar republic, but the advent of Adolf Hitler and his powerfully centralized, militaristic Nazi regime, openly dedicated to a revision of the treaties ending the previous war and the balance of power they had created, produced no change of course. Chamberlain put little faith in the League of Nations or collective security. His plan was to achieve stability and peace by the active pursuit of the policy of appeasement, an attempt to discover Hitler's demands and allow and even help him to achieve them without war. He did not permit himself to consider the possibility that those demands might be unacceptable or even unlimited. Nor did he let strategic considerations affect his willingness to accept actions and demands, such as Germany's annexation of Austria and of the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia, that threatened the security of Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe, and therefore of France and Britain. To think of strategy was to consider the possibility of war, to plan for it and to prepare for it, and that was a course of action that was unthinkable.

Chamberlain was not a pacifist. Before becoming Prime Minister he had favored increased spending for armaments, though at a level pitifully below what would be needed. All he was prepared to support was a "quick fix," a single investment that would raise the low level of British military power to a point that would permit the kind of diplomacy he had in mind. Thereafter he resisted calls for increased expenditure on armaments even as Germany's power grew and its policy became more menacing.

There is no doubt that the cost of rearmament put a great strain on the British economy, already weakened by World War I and the Great Depression. The cost of defense went from 15 percent of a growing national budget in 1935 to 38 percent in 1938; taxes rose steadily, but they were not enough to bridge the gap without borrowing. The British seemed to face the dilemma of whether to rearm as quickly and fully as possible and endanger the economy or to accept what appeared to be necessary restraints without achieving security. In fact, both the economy and national defense had already been damaged by the government's unwillingness to pay for reasonable armaments in the 1920's and early 30's. As Paul M. Kennedy has put it: "For a modest increase in defense expenditure not only would the services have had fewer deficiencies when the war came but unemployment would have been cut and unused re-

* L.W. Fuchser, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Norton, 1982). It is worth noting that the author is by no means hostile to his protagonist. He describes his work as a "not unsympathetic reexamination" of the "popular image of Chamberlain as a weak and ineffectual old man feebly waving his umbrella, promising 'peace in our time' while the Wehrmacht marched into the Rhineland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sources exploited." Keeping defense industries alive at a reasonable level, moreover, would have made it much easier to achieve faster rearmament later when the Nazi menace arose. As it turned out, the need for a sudden and great acceleration in rearmament put a terrible strain on an unprepared arms industry and a weak economy.

But this entire line of argument, which tries to justify Baldwin's and Chamberlain's policy because of the need to preserve the economy, examines only one side of the problem. The question is, after all, was there a real and serious threat to Britain's security? If there was, then a failure to meet the challenge at any cost might mean that there would be no independent economy to preserve. The economic costs of all-out rearmament, in other words, must be measured against the economic as well as other costs of the alternative. In the event, Britain lost access to the European continent, was compelled to fight a war at high cost for more than five years, suffered heavy military and civilian casualties and terrible damage to London and other cities, and within a few years lost almost all of its empire.

Had the British been materially and psychologically prepared to resist at any time up to 1936, all of this could have been averted. Had they been ready even by 1938, the costs of the war would have been far smaller in every respect. The best study of the military and economic realities reaches this judgment of the Western democracies' prospects in 1938 as compared to 1939 on the basis of the actual economic and military situation:

> In terms of numbers of divisions, economic resources, industrial capacity, and naval forces, Germany would have faced overwhelming Allied superiority in 1938 whether she faced only Britain and France, or an enlarged coalition that included Russia and perhaps Poland. Even so, the war against Germany would not have been easy, nor would it have been quickly won. But the results would have been inevitable and would have led to the eventual collapse of the Nazi regime at considerably less cost than the war that broke out the following September.*

Even when Hitler demonstrated the unreality and futility of appeasement, Chamberlain was reluctant to give it up. As important segments of British opinion began to swing in the direction of resistance to Hitler, Chamberlain was able to use the very military weakness he had helped create as a reason to avoid confrontation and to continue to seek accommodation. Such expenditure as he had permitted he insisted be used unequally to build up the navy and air force. He was determined that there be no army large enough to provide the continental expeditionary force that had suffered such fearful losses in the Great War. He also opposed staff talks with the French. Without an army, a plan to use one, or any collaboration with France, how could Britain be expected to offer military opposition to German aggression? He had created what proved to be a vicious circle: commitment to appeasement prevented adequate rearmament, and the resulting military weakness supported the case for more appeasement.

In his efforts, Chamberlain received much help from the military chiefs, no less traumatized than their Prime Minister by the horrors of the previous war. They consistently assessed Britain's strategic situation using the darkest of worst-case analyses at the same time as they wildly overestimated the economic, diplomatic, and military power of the enemy. Down to 1939 their testimony repeatedly made it easy for Chamberlain to persuade his colleagues that military action was unthinkable and appeasement the only course.

Hitler's march into Austria did not change this attitude but only confirmed Chamberlain in his belief that appeasement was the right policy. The *Anschluss* or union with Austria proclaimed in March 1938 was of great strategic importance: it allowed Germany to surround Czechoslovakia on three sides, making its long-range defense impossible; it also moved the Germans into direct contact with the Balkans, allowing them to put pressure on those states, as well. Chamberlain, nevertheless, accepted the news calmly, expressing relief that "at any rate the question was now out of the way."

THE problem of Czechoslovakia now loomed. The British cabinet considered three courses of action: Churchill's suggestion of a grand alliance against the dictators, a renewed commitment to France which would indirectly be a commitment to defend Czechoslovakia, or a refusal to make any commitments while pressing the Czechs to come to terms with Hitler. Chamberlain, of course, favored the last policy, arguing that "we should have to say that it was impracticable effectively to aid Czechoslovakia in time and that all we could do would be to make war on Germany, but we were in no position from the armament point of view to enter such a war. . . ."

Chamberlain's main fear was that Britain would somehow be dragged into a war with Germany by the need to defend Czechoslovakia against Germany. Strategic considerations left him cold. His only concerns were that Germany be persuaded to take only the western part of Czechoslovakia, where the Sudeten Germans lived, and not the entire country, and that the Czechs not resist, thereby forcing the French to honor their treaty and facing the British with the horrible dilemma of either going to war or seeing France defeated by Germany. He vigorously pursued his

* Williamson Murray, *The Change in the European Balance of Power, 1938-1939* (Princeton University Press, 1984).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

policy of active appeasement, forcing the Czechs to give way, but until the last minute it seemed he would not be able to restrain Hitler from attacking the Czechs and threatening a general war. In London schoolchildren were being evacuated and hospitals prepared for the expected aerial attacks when a tired and discouraged Prime Minister addressed the nation by radio. He spoke not to rally his people to the defense of freedom, nor did he mention the stakes for Britain in the great strategic upheaval threatened by the fall of Czechoslovakia. Quite the contrary, his speech made it clear that the British government was not willing to fight:

> How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between peoples of whom we know nothing. . . .
>
> However much we may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful neighbor, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that. I am myself a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me; but if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.
>
> Under such a domination life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living; but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake, and that the call to risk everything in their defense, when all the consequences are weighed, is irresistible.

Chamberlain, of course, was not convinced that the great issues were at stake. At the last minute Hitler was persuaded to attend the conference at Munich where he agreed on September 30, 1938 to accept what he wanted as a gift instead of seizing it by force, announcing, "I have no more territorial demands to make in Europe." He also signed an agreement pressed upon him by Chamberlain in which both sides recognized the importance of Anglo-German relations, expressed the desire not to go to war with each other again, and resolved to consult each other in efforts to preserve peace in Europe.

Hitler had no difficulty in signing this vacuous piece of piety, but for Chamberlain it was the really important result of the Munich conference. When Chamberlain returned to London he was greeted by crowds cheering him for averting war. He waved at them showing the precious document to which he and Hitler had signed their names and said: "This is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time." Chamberlain was referring to the return of Disraeli from the Congress of Berlin in 1878, but the analogy could hardly have been less appropriate. At Berlin a great power had been forced to disgorge part of the gains it had won by military aggression because of the firm resistance of the concerted powers of Europe and the dispatch of the British navy to the Dardanelles. At Munich the aggressor was handed what he wanted without the need to move a soldier in return for the promise of polite conversation in the future.

The settlement at Munich, wrote A.J.P. Taylor, apparently without irony, "was a triumph for all that was best and most enlightened in British life; a triumph for those who had preached equal justice between peoples; a triumph for those who had courageously denounced the harshness and short-sightedness of Versailles." Even if the motives alleged were the only ones at work we should nonetheless need to point out that Munich was also the triumph of an unrealistic muddle-headedness that based its idea of justice on a gross misreading of history and its notion of safety on the promises of a demonic and ruthless leader of a brutal totalitarian regime whose writings, speeches, and actions over a decade and a half showed that he had no intention of keeping them.

Less than six months after Munich, in March 1939, Hitler shattered whatever hopes of conciliation remained by marching into Czechoslovakia and occupying the entire country. This action destroyed the pretext on which the appeasers rested so many of their hopes: that Hitler wanted only to restore regions inhabited mainly by Germans to the Reich, a limited aim in accord with the principle of national self-determination and no threat to the general stability of Europe. It also made a mockery of his promise that he had no more European territorial demands and, more important, of his formal guarantee of Czechoslovakia's territorial integrity. His apologists could no longer claim that he had only legitimate and limited goals or, as Chamberlain had claimed, that he was a man of his word. For most Britons Hitler's occupation of Prague was a turning point, the end of their hope for and belief in appeasement.

Chamberlain himself was shaken. In the days after the occupation of Prague, still dominated by the analogy of 1914, he invoked the name of Lord Grey over and over again, this time, however, musing that Grey had not been wrong about Germany, after all. But he and his supporters clung to their hopes. In the Munich agreement Britain, no less than Germany, had guaranteed the independence of Czechoslovakia. To honor its word, Britain would need to take up arms at once in defense of the victims of German aggression. Hitler, however, had arranged things so that it might appear to those who desperately wanted to believe it that Czechoslovakia had suffered a collapse which was largely internal and that Germany

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was only picking up the pieces. This was the view seized on by Chamberlain, who told Parliament that Britain could not be bound to guarantee a state that no longer existed. He went on to say that he meant to stay with his policy of substituting "the method of discussion for the method of force in the settlement of differences."

Such an approach, however, was no longer possible. A free country with a free press and any pride and sense of honor, one that permits some degree of independence within the governing party and criticism by the opposition, will not easily bear the kind of humiliation caused by the Nazi occupation of Prague. Many Englishmen came to agree with Churchill's assessment of Munich: "The government had to choose between shame and war. They have chosen shame and they will get war." An angry rumbling in the country, and especially within his own Conservative party, forced Chamberlain to take a very different line in public. Only two days after his refusal to act in defense of Czechoslovakia he made a speech in which he declared that "Any attempt to dominate the world by force was one which the democracies must resist." Such talk was greeted with enthusiasm, and it soon became clear that the British people would no longer put up with appeasement and weakness but demanded a new policy of resistance and strength.

In this atmosphere, fearing the charge of inaction Chamberlain gave way to overreaction. Rumors of a German plan to attack Rumania, almost certainly false, but in any case unproven, as well as ill-founded fears that Hitler was about to attack Poland, led the British to guarantee Poland against aggression and then to extend the same guarantee to Rumania and Greece. It is still valuable to read Churchill's judgment on this belated change of course:

> There was sense in fighting for Czechoslovakia in 1938 when the German army could scarcely put half-a-dozen trained divisions on the western front, when the French with nearly sixty or seventy divisions could most certainly have rolled forward across the Rhine or into the Ruhr. But this had been judged unreasonable, rash, below the level of modern intellectual thought and morality. Yet now at last the two Western democracies declared themselves ready to stake their lives upon the territorial integrity of Poland. History, which we are told is mainly the record of the crimes and follies and miseries of mankind, may be scoured and ransacked to find a parallel to this sudden and complete reversal of five or six years' policy of easy-going placatory appeasement, and its transformation almost overnight into a readiness to accept an obviously imminent war on far worse conditions and on the greatest scale.

The British, in fact, lacked the military resources needed to defend the guaranteed states or any plan for doing so. They sent neither money nor arms to the Poles, nor, of course, did they even consider the possibility of attacking Germany from the West should Hitler move East. In spite of Britain's very real economic and financial difficulties, the British government vastly increased its planned expenditures for rearmament. In spite of its powerful aversion to a continental commitment, it instituted conscription in peacetime. Chamberlain did not take these steps because he expected war, which he still hoped to avoid by diplomacy. Events had made a policy of full and open appeasement impossible; now he hoped to bring Hitler to his senses by the threat of confrontation backed by the commitments in Eastern Europe, the rearmament program, and conscription. Then he could negotiate a peaceful settlement.

As steps to deter war these came far too late, for their results would not be felt for years. Perhaps the most important reason for the failure of this belated attempt at deterrence was that it lacked credibility. Whatever its military capabilities, would Britain have the will to use them? Whatever its commitments, would the British have the courage to honor them? Even after Prague and the shift to a policy of deterrence in the political and military spheres, Chamberlain continued to employ appeasement by offering economic and colonial concessions. Small wonder that Hitler never seems to have taken his opponents' warnings seriously. As he laid plans for the attack on Poland he discounted the danger from the leaders of Britain and France. "I saw them at Munich," he said, "they are little worms."

The exposure of the self-deception, weakness, and fear that lay behind the appeasement policy created an enormous political pressure that forced the government to reverse itself sharply and dramatically; in its embarrassment and in its eagerness to be rid of the charge of weakness and dishonor the Chamberlain government was driven to actions that were both vain and foolish. Chamberlain never really gave up all hope of finding a way to conciliate Hitler. Even when Hitler invaded Poland the British Prime Minister delayed keeping his commitment until the fury of his Conservative colleagues forced his hand. Finally, however, Hitler's attack on Poland forced Britain to enter a war for which it was still ill-prepared, for which it had no realistic strategic plan, and one, we should not forget, that it came within a hair's breadth of losing.

THE lessons of "Munich," in spite of attempts at a defense of appeasement and at a revision in our understanding of the origins of World War II, seem much the same today as they did to most people in the West in the 1940's and 1950's. They indicate that an excessive fear of war, an unwillingness to think clearly about strategy and to take the steps necessary to deter aggression and defend vital interests wher-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ever they may be, most of all, perhaps, a refusal honestly to examine the actions and intentions of potential aggressors and to act accordingly, are not a satisfactory way to avoid war when a powerful nation is dissatisfied with the status quo. It may never have been possible to deter the fanatical Hitler from war, but *Germany* could have been prevented from launching any serious adventure down to the occupation of the Rhineland. Had the democracies responded then, as they could have with no danger, it seems more than likely that Hitler would soon have been deposed. Failing that, neither he nor any other German leader could have posed a danger so long as France and Britain chose to prevent it. The means were not lacking, only the understanding and the will. The failure of will, to be sure, helped undermine the understanding, but so did the intellectual error of relying entirely on a single major experience, the most recent, as a guide to the understanding of history.

Perhaps the immediacy of such a powerful analogy, which was lacking to the men of 1914, helps explain the much greater foolishness of the men of 1939, but both examples seem relevant to and necessary for us today. Both, moreover, seem to point in the same general direction. The failure of both sets of revisionists to understand the causes of the two world wars stems in large part from their habit of treating nations as interchangeable counters in the game of international relations, who might as well be called A, B, and C as Germany, France, and Britain. But nations are different from one another in significant ways. There is no need to focus on moral differences, though the distinction between a nation led by Hitler and one led by Chamberlain is not trivial in understanding their actions on the international scene. It is enough to focus on the positions of the nations in the hierarchy of power, on their own view of their proper place in it, and on their intentions.

From such a perspective nations easily sort themselves into those who are generally content and those who are dissatisfied. The Britains of both Grey and Chamberlain were content; and the Germanys of both the Kaiser and Hitler were dissatisfied. Though different in many important respects, they shared an unswerving determination to change the balance of power in their favor, *so oder so*, as Hitler used to say, by bluff, by threats, and, if necessary, by war. Neither had goals compatible with British safety; both had to be stopped. The only thing that might have prevented each war was a clear and sufficient commitment on the part of the satisfied powers to defend themselves through firm alliances, clear and versatile strategies, and the military power to make them effective. That done, the satisfied nations could have tried some of the conciliatory approaches favored by the revisionists, but then theirs would have been a policy of appeasement from strength. If that failed, they could have relied upon their strength to deter their discontented neighbors. Had that failed, their strength might, at least, have made the war shorter and less costly.

V

THE lessons of the two world wars provide useful analogies for the world today. Once again we see two great antagonistic powers, one largely content, the other plainly dissatisfied. Like Great Britain before the two wars, the United States is a contented power, concerned lest a newly risen rival destroy a satisfactory equilibrium and threaten its safety. It is more similar to the earlier Britain which, though it had lost ground relatively since its peak in the 19th century, remained the richest and most powerful nation in the world, and was still capable, materially and morally, of resisting German ambitions and the burgeoning German navy.

To be sure, the United States disarmed drastically after World War II, but since the Korean war, unlike Britain between the wars, it has never allowed its defenses to reach the level of inadequacy to which the British forces sank in the 1930's. Distracted by the war in Vietnam, however, the United States did allow its naval and nuclear forces to decline sharply relative to the Soviets by the late 1970's. The Soviet Union had not previously had a considerable navy, so its construction of a large fleet represented a significant gain in relative strength. Its achievement of parity (some would say superiority) in nuclear weapons changed the balance of power to a degree that Tirpitz would have welcomed with delight.

The American response took longer and was less effective than Britain's before 1914. Britain won the naval race, retained naval supremacy, and remained invulnerable to political blackmail resting on naval power. The Americans did not respond to the Soviet challenge for more than a decade. The change in policy began in the Carter administration, in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, though Carter had run on a platform calling for a reduction in defense spending. The Reagan administration has intensified the effort, apparently with some effect, for the Soviets seem fearful of continuing the competition for military advantage with an America that is willing to compete and are clamoring for arms agreements that will allow them to keep the advantages they have gained in the one-sided arms race of the 1960's and 70's.

Like the British of the earlier period, however, the Americans up to now have been unwilling to pay the full price needed to prepare for possible threats. As Britain had no conscription then, the United States has none now, though a volunteer army is expensive and the quality of its personnel and its potential effectiveness very much in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doubt. This is true in spite of the fact that the European forces of the Soviet Union and its satellites vastly outnumber those of the NATO nations and in spite of the fact that the oil fields of the Middle East, vital to America's European and Japanese allies and important even to the United States, are vulnerable to many kinds of attack.

To prevent attacks on these two areas of important American interest the United States is compelled, *de facto*, to rely on the deterrent effect of the threat posed by its nuclear weapons. The need to rely on the threat of nuclear war to protect crucial interests would be bad enough if such a threat could be believed, but the fact is that in recent years it has become very much less credible. The growth of Soviet nuclear forces and the absence of any American attempt to create a defense against attacking missiles has made it hard to believe that the United States would ever launch a nuclear attack to defend its allies and interests abroad that would bring nuclear retaliation against its own land. The credibility of any American resistance is further reduced by demands from such former cold warriors as Robert McNamara and McGeorge Bundy for a pledge that the United States would not be the first to resort to nuclear weapons. Were such a pledge given and believed, there would be even less to deter an aggressor vastly superior in conventional forces, able to reach and supply the crucial areas by land, and with a navy on and below the sea that could do much to prevent American forces from reaching the battlefield. Like the British of an earlier time, the Americans have been willing to pay the price for considerably less deterrent power than may be called for.

To understand why this should be so requires us to examine both the analogies we have considered, the ways in which they reveal the similarities between the British and American societies, and the difficulty both have in meeting serious military challenges over an extended period of time. Both are constitutional, democratic, commercial states with a powerful belief in the right of the individual to the pursuit of his private interests and in limits on the right of the state to interfere with it. Their history of isolation, combined with their commitment to individual liberty and a long tradition of distrust of the military, especially the army, have led them to reject compulsory military service except briefly in extraordinary circumstances. The advent of a welfare state in democratic nations directly subject to the power of public opinion has placed increased pressure on governments to spend public money to satisfy domestic demands at the expense of the requirements of defense. Expenditures for weapons and armies to deter war are especially difficult to justify; by their nature they will never be used if they are successful, so critics can always claim they are wasteful and unnecessary.

The moral beliefs of both nations have rested on the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which the Sermon on the Mount and the pacifist strain in Christianity have played a greater role in this than in earlier centuries. Both have been free societies in which criticism of one's own country's policies, institutions, traditions, and values is permitted and protected. In the course of the century, alienation from the alleged capitalistic exploitation, imperialism, and militarism of Great Britain and the United States on the part of some intellectuals and politicians has grown to the point where they are far more likely to find fault with their own government's actions than with those of rival nations.

In such nations, military expenditures, not to mention military actions, quickly encounter internal opposition. Such societies are always in danger of slipping from the realistic, if not entirely adequate, response to danger made by the Britain that confronted the Kaiser into the self-deluding inaction with which interwar Britain tried to appease Hitler. The dominant elements in such societies and their lack of expansive ambitions make them long for the closest approximation to their traditional comfortable policies of isolation that conditions will permit and sometimes beyond.

Whatever their intentions, however, their power and their desire for international stability unavoidably place them in the path of dissatisfied, revisionist states. They are not free to stand clear. They may insist "To Hell With Serbia," as a London newspaper headline proclaimed after the Archduke's assassination in 1914; they may ask "Where is Prague?" as did a different London newspaper in 1938, and answer "If the 'collective-security' madmen get their way you might find yourself there in a trench one day. If the policy of isolation triumphs, you will . . . not fight anybody unless they come here looking for trouble"; some of them may even think it better to be Red than dead. But to no avail. The free and spirited people of a still-powerful nation will not allow the world order to be torn up to its disadvantage and their security endangered, and they will reject any leadership prepared to do so. The only choice available to leaders of such nations is whether to act with realism while there is time or avoid the hard decisions and wait for a crisis.

VI

If the United States is to be compared with Great Britain, particularly before World War I, what of the Soviet Union? The obvious analogy is with Germany, but which one? The answer is not perfectly simple, for there are resemblances with both the Wilhelmine and Hitlerian phases. With the coming of the cold war, many Westerners were struck by the resemblance of Stalin's Russia to Hitler's Germany. Both were illiberal, highly centralized regimes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that seemed to fit into the general designation of totalitarian states. Both were police states that treated their own people with systematic brutality. Both swallowed up smaller states on their borders, ruled them with an iron hand, despoiled and exploited them for the benefit of the master country. Both were publicly and proudly champions of utopian doctrines alien to Western values, made clear their hostility to the Western nations, and expressed a desire to overturn the current international system and establish one more to their liking.

For these and other reasons we should not brush the analogy aside too carelessly, but when viewed from the perspective of the realities of international relations it is significantly flawed. The most important difficulties come from the nature of National Socialist Germany, from Hitler's character, and from his aims. The Nazi regime aimed at a profound revolution in the society of Europe and in the international order. Hitler was the crucial figure in the Nazi revolution and the controller of its future in a way and to a degree that not even Lenin was for the Soviet revolution. He was the charismatic and dynamic figure without whom the system could not exist, and he knew it. He meant to dominate the entire European continent by conquest and to introduce his racialist policies, and he rightly believed that his own leadership was necessary for any hope of success. The Nazi economy was a conjurer's trick that required the riches of Eastern Europe to avoid imminent collapse. For this reason, too, Hitler could not afford to wait. He had, moreover, a specific plan of conquest, opportunistically flexible in tactics, but clear and inexorable in its goals and strategy. Hitler, moreover, was a man in a hurry. Since he needed to accomplish so much in his own lifetime he could not wait for a favorable moment, or be patient, he must force the pace.

The goals and strategy of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, though often stated in a general way, have not been spelled out in the detail Hitler employed in *Mein Kampf*. The more utopian hopes of an immediate Communist revolution throughout the world were soon dashed and put into storage when Stalin defeated Trotsky and chose to pursue the policy of establishing Communism solidly in Russia and seeking its interests at considerable expense to the world revolution. Supported by the huge body of Marxist-Leninist doctrine that places its hopes on the forces of history and by an increasingly powerful bureaucracy, not on an individual, Soviet Communism could survive Stalin's tyranny and the disasters of World War II, emerge with the regime intact, and ultimately see the peaceful change of leadership between generations. The Soviet Union's leaders today, lacking specific plans and ruling a state that they have been able to manage and control, one whose relative military power has grown remarkably, need not be in a hurry. The problem and danger they present to the West lacks the emergency character that clear-eyed Westerners in the 1930's recognized in the threat posed by Nazi Germany.

Wilhelmine Germany presents a far closer and more useful analogy, as the observations of the new revisionists tacitly suggest (though, as we have already seen, their understanding of the German half of the analogy is badly in error).

Like imperial Germany, the Soviet Union is a relatively new creation, not yet seventy years old. To be sure, there was a Russian state for centuries before that, and there are important continuities that still shape the course of Soviet policy to some degree. But there had also been a Prussian state for centuries when the king of Prussia became the German emperor in 1871, and the new order continued to reflect the Prussian tradition in many ways. Both 1871 and 1917, however, were recognized as new departures both within and outside the nations involved, and history has confirmed that judgment. The new Germany, to be sure, pursued a conservative policy under its founder, Otto von Bismarck, but the arrival of Wilhelm II in 1888 unleashed a new dynamism that produced the expansionist policy, the naval program, international tension, and ultimately the Great War.

The Soviet Union was committed from the first to a program of world revolution and the destruction of the current world order, but its internal weakness forced it to put such hopes and a forward policy aside while it struggled with civil war, foreign hostility, and serious economic problems. It was not until the coming of World War II that it was able to turn to expansion, but then it moved with increasing activity and extraordinary success, acquiring control of all of Eastern Europe up to the center of Germany, an achievement beyond the dreams of any czar. Since the end of the war, the Soviets have moved from a position of pitiful military inferiority to their chief rival to one that is at least equal and, in the opinion of many expert observers, superior.

This gain in relative military power has allowed them to move from cautious challenges to the status quo in their own vicinity, like the Berlin blockade in 1948, to bolder actions, like the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the attempt secretly to place nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the increased support of insurrectionary and terrorist movements throughout the world, the use of Cuban troops in Africa as surrogate forces to aid such movements, the use of Cubans to instigate, support, and guide Communist movements and regimes in the Western hemisphere, and, at last, the use of Soviet military forces outside the borders of the Soviet Union and its East European satellites in the invasion of Afghanistan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That is a record of dynamic turbulence, expansion of power, threat to a peaceful world order whose scope and success put the performance of Wilhelm's imperial Germany in the shade. The Soviets have explained and defended their actions in terms that are often similar to those used by the Germans. On the one hand, they have argued that they acted simply to defend themselves. From the first they have complained that the Soviet Union is surrounded by enemies, "encircled" by the forces of capitalism and imperialism, and that all its expansion and growing military power can be explained on those grounds. That claim clearly had some merit before the end of World War II, but is not credible thereafter.

Indeed what is remarkable is the complaisance and relative inertia of the United States and the West toward the Soviet Union's turbulent and threatening behavior from the mid-1940's to the mid-1960's, a period when the democracies had a monopoly or an overwhelming superiority in atomic and nuclear weapons. When the Soviets blockaded Berlin, the Americans undertook to supply the city by air rather than send a regiment "to clear all obstacles," as General Clay recommended. In the face of an American monopoly of atomic bombs, Stalin was only "prodding the capitalist world with the tip of a bayonet," as Khrushchev later said.

In the 1950's, rebellions in Poland, East Germany, and Hungary received no support from the West, and the Soviets were permitted to crush them without interference. When the Soviets put up the Berlin Wall, President Kennedy did not knock it down, as former President Truman recommended, but allowed it to stand and then declared himself a Berliner. When the Soviets were caught sneaking nuclear missiles into Cuba and lying about doing so, Kennedy did not attack the missile sites or invade Cuba, as urged by so unaggressive a Senator as J. William Fulbright, nor, having faced the Soviets down, did he demand an end to their support of Castro. Instead he publicly gave a pledge not to attack Cuba and privately promised to withdraw American Jupiter missiles from Turkey in return for the removal of those in Cuba. In 1968 the West took no action when a Soviet army overthrew a Czech government that was insufficiently subservient. In the 1960's and 70's the United States negotiated treaties that allowed the Soviet Union to reach parity in nuclear weapons and, perhaps, to attain superiority.

All these are hardly the actions of menacing enemies whose threat to the security of the Soviet Union explains and justifies the dynamic expansion of Soviet power. Still, for years, "encirclement" was the cry of the Soviet Union, and there has never been a shortage of apologists in the West who have taken up the same cry. As the absurdity of the claim became ever more clear, it was heard much less, but the rapprochement of the United States with China has raised it again. Seweryn Bialer, writing in 1980, observed that "while the Soviets buried some fifteen years ago the idea of 'capitalist encirclement,' the mentality of a besieged fortress, a new specter is raising its head—that of a new encirclement by a coalition of China and industrialized Western nations—a specter which revives the old mentality."*

In that same year, in fact, Marshal N.V. Ogarkov, Soviet Chief of Staff, complained of the "creation of a military alliance between the USA, China, and Japan similar to the 1930's Rome-Berlin-Tokyo 'axis' of sad memory." He asserted that in improving relations with China "the Western powers are calculating on pushing Beijing into open aggressive actions against our country and the states of South East Asia." The suggestion, of course, is absurd: Japan is almost entirely unarmed and apparently eager to stay that way; American relations with China in no way resemble a military alliance. Yet the new version is no more ridiculous than the clamor raised by the Soviets and their apologists over the last four decades that they are under deadly threat from the West.

IT WOULD be easy to dismiss this kind of talk as insincere, "disinformation," simply propaganda intended to justify hostile actions, but scholars who know the Soviet Union take it more seriously. Bialer again:

> The Soviet concept of national security as shaped by experience, history, and world view tends to exaggerate dramatically the dangers to the homeland and to subscribe to a defensive overkill, to an enormous defensive overcommitment. It leads Soviet decision makers to magnify the requirements of security to a degree unprecedented and unheard of in other modern societies. To describe their concept of national security as oversecurity or total security is to underestimate their position.

That is a very generous interpretation of the development of the greatest war machine ever assembled in human history. It is a machine that consists chiefly of units and weapons appropriate for aggressive war. Its doctrine has never accepted the American idea of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) and its deterrent effect on aggression. Instead its leaders, "political as well as military, have sought to develop a strategic military posture that would allow the USSR to prevail over the United States in the event of a general nuclear war."† It has since the 1950's "placed considerable

* *Stalin's Successors* (Cambridge University Press, 1980).

† Coit D. Blacker, "Military Forces," in *After Brezhnev*, Robert F. Byrnes, ed. (University of Indiana Press, 1983). For a fine discussion of Soviet military doctrine, see pp. 151-165.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

emphasis on preemption."* It now includes the greatest navy Russia has ever had, one that, in the words of Coit Blacker, has grown from "a glorified coastal patrol force . . . [to] an important vehicle for the worldwide display of Soviet military power and political purpose." It is, moreover, a military organization that has not confined its activities to defending its borders or even to controlling its satellites. As David Holloway notes:

> Representatives of the Soviet military, both combat forces and advisers, are currently [in 1982] deployed in fourteen Asian and African countries. Small contingents of Soviet military advisers serve in Angola, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Seychelles, and Kampuchea; more substantial forces are present in Ethiopia, North and South Yemen, Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Vietnam. The number of Soviet troops stationed outside Warsaw Pact countries totaled 17,000 in 1982, excluding Afghanistan. Military and paramilitary personnel from Cuba, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia have also been deployed abroad. The provision of Soviet and East European military equipment, from small arms and artillery to armored infantry vehicles and tanks, made possible the victory of pro-Communist forces in Angola (1975) and the Ethiopian defeat of the Somalis (1978).

In the light of all this contrary evidence, it is hard to credit the sincerity of Soviet fear of an attack from the United States and its allies, just as it was hard to take seriously Germany's fear of an attack by the Entente powers or a preemptive attack by the British on its fleet. But Bialer tells us that Soviet alarm is not spurious: "[F]ear of . . . a holocaust among Soviet leaders, elites, and peoples is much more real, much more tangible than in the United States."

Perhaps, then, the Soviets' fear is real. In the same way that British power stood in the path of German ambitions before 1914, the Soviet leaders since World War II have seen the United States as, to cite Bialer again, "the only major obstacle to [their] domination of the Eurasian theater and to the consummation in terms of political and economic influence of the fruits of victory in World War II." It may well be that for the Soviets (as for the Germans in relation to Britain before 1914), their anxiety comes from *a fear of what the Americans might do if they once found out what the Soviets wanted to do.*

Such an analysis accords well with the rest of a psychological profile that fits both countries. Like imperial Germany, the Soviet Union shows the combination of clamoring aggressiveness, great sensitivity to any slight to its pride along with a remarkable insensitivity to the concerns of others characteristic of "arriviste" powers. In 1971, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko said, in words not too different from those used by the Kaiser: "Today there is no question of significance which can be decided without the Soviet Union or in opposition to it." When early in the Carter administration Zbigniew Brzezinski, as National Security Adviser, challenged the Soviets to cooperate with the United States if they did not want to become "historically irrelevant to the great issues of our time," he greatly provoked "Soviet sensitivities and status consciousness." Yet, as one shrewd observer, Arnold Horelick, has pointed out, "one looks in vain for evidence in Soviet pronouncements of sensitivity to the insecurities of others that the Soviet Union's own security programs may promote."

VII

THE most striking and important resemblances between imperial Germany and the Soviet Union, however, are in the way each state, dissatisfied with the distribution of power in the world, restlessly has sought to undo the status quo and to bring about desired changes by building great military forces and trying to use them for political purposes. Between the 1890's and 1914 Germany involved itself in quarrels in Venezuela, the Philippines, Samoa, Morocco, Africa south of the Sahara, as well as in Europe. Almost everywhere the Germans sought to take advantage of turbulence and disturbed conditions and often tried to create such conditions where they did not exist. Bismarck had declared that Germany was a satiated power after 1871, and his policy showed that he meant it. Under Wilhelm II, however, the opposite was true, as the Germans fished in troubled waters and churned up many that were still. German goals, policies, and actions around the world were the opposite of the conservative ones pursued and carried out by Great Britain, for the latter wanted to preserve the world order in its essentials while the former insisted on drastic changes.

Well-informed scholars paint a similar picture of the Soviet Union today:

> To say it simply, the Soviet Union is interested in fomenting conflicts, escalating conflicts, maintaining them at a high level of intensity, and exploiting them, but not in their peaceful solution, especially in their early stages, when they are most susceptible of solution. . . .
>
> The Soviet Union is obviously not a "sated power." Even when measured only from the viewpoint of great-power competition, it is a

* David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race* (Yale University Press, 1983). Holloway says that less emphasis has been placed on preemption since the late 60's. He offers as possible reasons for the change he perceives increased Soviet confidence caused by the achievement of nuclear parity, and a changed attitude toward Stalin's behavior at the time of Hitler's attack. Another explanation might be that the acquisition of means that make preemption more possible has led to greater Soviet discretion in public statements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> new, dynamic great power. . . . This situation in itself would render difficult, highly competitive, complex, and unstable any relations with the Soviet Union now and for the foreseeable future. It would certainly preclude realization of those exaggerated hopes of the early Kissinger détente construed as a long-range balance of power and agreement of spheres of interest. . . .*

Even more than in the case of imperial Germany, these restless and disruptive tendencies do not result chiefly from the quirks of individual leaders or even from the psychology of the latecomer but are connected with a general outlook on the world, a "philosophy," as the scholars of the Great War like to say, that rests on the "unspoken assumptions" that are part of their education and experience. In the Soviet Union these are a developed version of Marxist-Leninist ideas that present a picture of a Manichean struggle for dominance between the forces of light—Socialism-Communism—and the forces of darkness—capitalism. Communist victory in the long run is assured; a lasting negotiated peace is both impossible and undesirable.

Though these ideas are dismissed by many Western observers as no longer influential with Soviet leaders, there is much evidence to suggest that they are. The leaders of the Soviet Union have been raised in a closed society in which these assumptions are the only ones heard, and these have been ceaselessly drummed into the heads of all Soviet citizens. In a much more open society, the minds of most of Germany's leaders from the 1890's to 1914 were dominated by the Social Darwinism that was the current *Zeitgeist*. Even in our own society, full of intellectual cross-currents, as open as any has ever been to a variety of ideas, most American leaders of both parties remain under the spell of the ideas of the Declaration of Independence and other liberal doctrines in which they have been raised, and give democracy and human rights a place in our policies far beyond any pragmatic justification. It would be strange indeed if Soviet leaders were capable of escaping their education and upbringing, viewing the central values inculcated in them with detached, cynical hypocrisy, and acting on the basis of pragmatic considerations alone.

Nor has the small group of men privy to full discussions of Soviet foreign policy had reason to be disillusioned with the philosophy of foreign relations they have inherited. They have seen or heard of the development of their nation from a state weak in industrial and military power to one of the two most powerful nations in the world, and the commitment to the Communist ideology in international relations has played no small part in its success. "In brief," as Adam Ulam puts it, "very little in their experience or in the international picture as it has evolved during the past twenty years or so could have persuaded the Kremlin that its basic guidelines for dealing with the outside world need drastic revision." In fact, the mind set of Soviet leaders is far more controlling than it is with their counterparts in other countries, because their underlying assumptions are integral to the stability of their regime:

> Communism may not be a guide to Soviet behavior, but it is a creed that continues to infuse Soviet policy with dynamism. It identifies a cause, defines the enemy, and inspires the faith. Without an enemy and a cause, there would be no justification for a Soviet claim to world leadership. Without the doctrine there would be no basis for the dictatorship of the Communist party internally. Indeed, the whole logic of domestic repression is based upon a foreign threat. Thus, the very nature of the Soviet system sets limits on how far détente can go.†

Georgi Arbatov, though speaking in the most hopeful period of "détente," said, "There can be no question as to whether the struggle between the two systems would or would not continue. That struggle is unavoidable." When a high Soviet official speaks in that way we have even less reason to doubt his sincerity than we would to doubt that of the Germans when they argued for *Weltpolitik* (world policy) as the only alternative to *Niedergang* (decline).

As with imperial Germany, the Soviet Union's restless, disruptive, and turbulent world view takes its most tangible, serious, and dangerous form in the military sphere. Like the Germans before 1914, the Soviets today have the most powerful army in the world, as they have had since the Americans swiftly demobilized after World War II. This alone would not cause undue alarm because it has been balanced by the formation of NATO, whose numerical inferiority has been compensated for by American superiority in the air and in nuclear weapons, until recent years, just as the formation of the Triple Entente and British superiority at sea held Germany's great army in check. But just as the construction of a German battle fleet aimed at parity with or superiority over the British navy threatened to upset the balance of power and the peace of the world, the Soviet Union's unprecedented progress in nuclear weapons has done the same in the world today, and for the same reasons.

The missile race of the 1960's, 70's, and 80's is the analogue to the naval race of the years 1897-1914. Both competitions were undertaken in the hope of using military power to achieve otherwise unattainable political ends. So long as its

---

* The quotations are from Bialer, *Stalin's Successors*, *passim*.

† Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II* (Pergamon, 1981).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

navy controlled the seas, Great Britain was free to support continental coalitions and otherwise stand in the path of German expansion without danger to the safety of its own people and homeland. The purpose of Tirpitz and the Kaiser in building their fleet was to neutralize the force that stood in Germany's way. Had they succeeded, they might have been able to force the nations of Europe into a subservient condition, to be exploited by the Germans to their own advantage, even without war. In any case, without British participation, they would surely have won a continental war and imposed their domination. The resulting position of power would have been too great to permit Britain's effective resistance around the world, perhaps too great to resist subservience to Germany.

In the same way, so long as the United States enjoyed clear nuclear superiority it could provide credible support to its allies in Western Europe and prevent Soviet expansion in the rest of the world. The purpose of the vast and rapid development of the USSR's nuclear arsenal is likewise to neutralize and render incredible America's support of its allies and others wishing to resist Soviet domination. In an optimistic form, the Soviets' goals would include the neutralization or, as it has been called, the "Finlandization" of Western Europe, its conversion into a territory subservient to and exploited by the Soviet Union. This has been the purpose behind the emplacement of intermediate-range nuclear missiles aimed at Western Europe and the great campaign of intimidation that tried to thwart an answering emplacement of similar weapons in Western European countries. But the growth of the Soviet arsenal of intercontinental missiles continues to be the chief weapon of intimidation, the most significant example of the attempt to convert military power into political influence.

For all these similarities there are, of course, important differences between the two situations. In one respect the modern United States has done better than Edwardian Britain in meeting the challenge of its turbulent, ambitious rival. By establishing a formal military alliance with the nations of Western Europe and placing a force of its own troops, however small and inferior to the Soviets', in Europe the United States has reduced temptation and created a clear, visible, and unmistakable deterrent to adventures in that area. Since neither the Americans nor their allies, however, have supplied conventional forces even equal to those opposing them, the real deterrent has been America's nuclear superiority and the credibility of its willingness to use it. Here is a difference that goes in the opposite direction, for unlike the British, the Americans have allowed their rival to achieve not less than parity in the military arm on which rests not only the credibility of the American commitment to its allies but its own safety.

EVEN as they have reached at least parity in nuclear weapons, the Soviets have maintained their superiority in conventional forces in Europe, vastly expanded their navy, and greatly increased their ability to foment and support friendly movements in the Third World. As Coit Blacker puts it:

> For the first time in Soviet history, Kremlin leaders have at their disposal a modern and balanced military force for possible use across a large spectrum of conflict, from intercontinental nuclear war with the United States to limited interventions in the Third World. Moreover, the current leadership regards further development of Soviet military power as a necessary precondition for the attainment of future foreign policy objectives. Military power has become the main Soviet instrument in the long-term political struggle they foresee with the West and China.

Some students of the Soviet Union and its policy emphasize pessimistic aspects of its situation: its economic inadequacies, the discontent of its citizens who want more consumer goods and more freedom, the discontent and restlessness of its satellites in Eastern Europe, the demographic evidence that projects a decline of the Great Russian population relative to the Asiatic population, and the threat of internal troubles any or all of these problems might cause. If they are right, the danger of war might arise, as it did for Europe in 1914, from an internal crisis, combined with some perceived opportunity created by Western weakness, which might lead the Soviets, as it led the Germans in 1914, to take a "leap in the dark" in the hope that some great success in foreign policy might solve whatever problem caused the crisis. Soviet leaders might hope that the West would remain quiet; failing that, they might hope to localize the conflict in the expectation that their conventional superiority might bring a quick and easy success before the United States intervened. If the Western democracies refused to give way, as they have in the past, the result might be the nuclear war that has haunted the imagination of mankind since 1945.

Others see the Soviet situation differently. They take note of the many difficulties confronting the Soviet Union but regard them as chronic, long-term problems that will not go away but are manageable. From such a perspective it is tempting to apply to the Soviet Union the waggish analysis made of the late Hapsburg empire: the situation is hopeless but not serious. Certainly, the Soviet leaders do not seem to take the gloomy view. They know they have problems but "tend to downplay them, instead emphasizing their accomplishments, and thus retain a genuine faith in the transcendent significance of that experience."*

* Robert Legvold, "The Nature of Soviet Power," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1977.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whatever their difficulties in the long run, from the more influential perspective of a single human lifespan their extraordinary gains in military might and the political force that inevitably goes with them are bound to impress the Soviet leaders more. No one will doubt that what we call the balance of power and the Soviets call the correlation of forces has shifted greatly in their favor in the last two decades, and if they look to the future with more confidence than fear they have some grounds for doing so. The greater danger, therefore, seems that a crisis will result from an overconfident Soviet action encouraged by a perception of Western weakness and reluctance to resist.

VIII

HERE again the "Munich" analogy is most helpful. The Western democracies find it natural and easy to turn away from unpleasant facts, to seek escape in their traditional isolationism. They tend to justify their behavior by applying a selective, partial, and inappropriate understanding of Judeo-Christian morality to international relations and to place ill-founded hopes in the essential similarity of opponents who, in fact, have been trained in an entirely different culture, have very different values, and look at the world in a very different way. They are badly handicapped by a prejudice against military preparation and action developed in the centuries when their geographic location gave them considerable safety without the need to pay for or use military forces. They tend to see the use of military power to achieve their legitimate ends as both inadequate and inappropriate.

Thus with an overwhelming advantage in nuclear weapons, the United States made no effort to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining ground and ultimately reaching its present position of parity or superiority. This remarkable decision would have been the equivalent of the British allowing Tirpitz's fleet of battleships to become at least the equal of its own, with predictable political results. The Americans justified their inaction by asserting their confidence in MAD. When the Soviets seemed to be operating from a different set of assumptions, the Americans spoke of the need to educate them. Unilateral restraint, however, did not seem to work. As Carter's Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, said: "We build, they build. We don't build, they build."

In answer to criticism, the American authors of what they called détente insisted that the closing of the gap was a good thing, for it granted the Soviets the equality they craved, calmed their paranoid fears of attack, thereby making disarmament agreements and peaceful coexistence easier. This was much like the view of the *Times* of London in 1933. The Nazi government of Germany, which had withdrawn from a disarmament conference, could not be expected to disarm when Germany had no arms. Only after the Germans had rearmed could they be asked to disarm. The resulting equality would allow them to sit comfortably with the other powers around the table of a disarmament conference.

When fears of Soviet nuclear superiority challenged the wisdom of the American policy, the men who had carried it forward found new reasons not to be alarmed. "What in the name of God is strategic superiority?" was the rhetorical question asked by Henry Kissinger. Years later, sobered by consideration of Soviet behavior in the interim, he found an answer: "For one side to have counterforce capability and the other side not to have it (especially if that side is also inferior in forces for local intervention) must tempt a political disaster." In its usual way, however, the United States continues to take the military threat to its safety and interests less seriously than is warranted. Yet both analogies we have examined show that the growth in military power of a dissatisfied Germany and the failure of the British and French to make an adequate military response played a central role in bringing on two world wars.

IT IS sometimes argued that analogies drawn from events that took place before the invention of nuclear weapons have no bearing in the nuclear era, that the very existence of nuclear weapons with their unprecedented capacity for destruction create a "minimal deterrence" that is adequate to guarantee a degree of prudence that would prevent a major war. Consideration of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 badly undermines that comforting suggestion. On that occasion the Soviet Union tried to place a force of nuclear missiles secretly in Cuba. It is generally agreed that the main purpose was to change the balance of nuclear forces, then overwhelmingly in America's favor, and to use the result to solve a number of serious political problems, both domestic and foreign. At that time, the United States had deployed hundreds of intercontinental nuclear missiles capable of striking the Soviet Union and hundreds of additional nuclear weapons on bombing planes that could easily reach it from European bases. There can be no doubt that together they were capable of destroying the Soviet Union. At the same time the Soviets' nuclear arsenal of weapons capable of hitting the United States consisted of fewer than 50 ICBM's, perhaps as few as four. Yet the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev took the chance of installing the missiles. In effect, he adopted Tirpitz's risky program of trying to catch up with the force that guaranteed the rival's safety, and that allowed it freely to conduct foreign policy, and tried to accomplish that with a single stroke.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was led to this bold attempt by a belief in the American President's lack of resolution. John F. Kennedy had been elected by a very slender margin that seemed to undermine his confidence and effectiveness. He met Khrushchev at Vienna, and published reports portrayed him as responding weakly to the bullying of his Soviet counterpart. When the Bay of Pigs invasion floundered, Kennedy failed to support it, incurring an ignominious defeat. When the Soviets erected the Berlin Wall he took no significant action, and his passivity was condemned by Berlin's Mayor Willy Brandt, among many others. The poet Robert Frost came back from a meeting with Khrushchev and reported the Soviet leader's opinion that the American people were "too liberal to fight." During the summer of 1962 Kennedy was under heavy attack from political opponents for what they saw as his softness and unwillingness to stand up to the Soviets. In these circumstances, Khrushchev tried his ploy but was discovered before the missiles were installed. Kennedy and his advisers saw this move as "the supreme Soviet probe of American intentions."

This time Kennedy took action. He imposed a blockade on Cuba, readied an army in Florida capable of invading the island, and placed American military forces, including those employing nuclear weapons, on alert. He explained his reaction in these terms:

> This sudden clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo, which cannot be accepted by this country if our courage and our commitment are ever to be trusted again by either friend or foe. The 1930's taught us a clear lesson: aggressive conduct, if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war.

After tense negotiations, the Soviets finally removed the missiles and promised not to install them in Cuba again.

We are not informed of what motivated the Soviet withdrawal, but the fact is that the Americans enjoyed military superiority at every relevant level in the Caribbean in October of 1962; they controlled the sea and the air, they could put a large army onto Cuba when the Soviets could not, and they had a vast and decisive advantage in nuclear weapons. It would have required complete madness in the Soviet leadership not to give way. Khrushchev was neither mad nor stupid, yet he ran the terrible risk of nuclear war in an attempt to achieve his goals.

There is no reason to be confident that a man like him will never again reach the position of supreme power in the USSR and no reason to be certain of another acceptable result. If the Soviets merely choose a more convenient place for their adventure their nuclear parity or superiority will nullify the deterrent effect of American nuclear weapons and their conventional superiority will discourage American resistance. Then the American President will be faced with the choice of yielding what may be a strategically important concession and destroying all confidence in what John Kennedy called our "courage and commitment" or launching a nuclear war we surely could not win and probably could not survive. Whatever the value of the earlier analogies, the experience of the missile crisis demonstrates the centrality in a nuclear age of military power and the danger created when a dissatisfied nation acquires enough of it to undermine the deterrent ability of those nations desiring stability.

IX

THE study of our two analogies suggests that today's discontented power is in some respects more like the Kaiser's Germany than Hitler's, but that is no cause for rejoicing. Hitler, to be sure, rode a revolution that was still young and a nation so dynamic that it presented an immediate threat to the stability of Europe and the peace of the world. Once he achieved military power comparable to his opponents' he could not be deterred, only resisted and defeated at extraordinary cost. Imperial Germany lacked the internal revolutionary character of Nazi Germany, but the racialist, Darwinian, expansionist ideology that shaped its goals and foreign policy were no less incompatible with stability and peace. Neither Germany was a "normal" power struggling for advantage in the competition with other nations in the usual way. Neither could be appeased by reasonable concessions. Both could be stopped only by effective deterrence or by war. The difference, if our analysis is correct, is that the Kaiser's Germany was not so volatile as Hitler's. Its foundations were secure enough to permit a halt in its expansion and a gradual acceptance of more limited goals when faced by reality in the form of an effective political and military deterrent.

The Soviet Union, like the Kaiser's Germany, is a dangerous power, not a "normal" one playing by the ordinary rules of international competition. From the beginning of its regime to the present day it has continued openly to announce as its goal the ultimate elimination of all foreign governments not compatible with its Communist doctrine. Neither the Kaiser nor even Hitler ever went so far. In some ways the Soviet Union is more dangerous than either Germany, because the totality of its military and naval power is far greater, both absolutely and relatively. It also enjoys the benefits of calling on a "revolutionary" ideology around the world as a weapon for undermining regimes not under its control. Even those who regard the goal and the revolutionary doctrine as mere words of continually decreasing reality and appeal must recognize that Communist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ideology continues to be of considerable value today, especially when supported by shipments of arms, Soviet military instructors and advisers, and substantial numbers of Communist soldiers from satellite countries. They should also remember that aggressive statements and actions, both by the Kaiser and by Hitler, were likewise dismissed as mere rhetoric by those who lived to regret it.

Even so, the analogy with Wilhelmine Germany leaves some room for hope. The Soviet Union, too, need not rush forward into immediate and inevitable conflict regardless of cost. The Soviet leaders have much to lose and time to consider alternatives. We have seen that imperial Germany might have been deterred by a major military effort by the British. Similarly, there is reason to hope that the Soviet Union can be deterred from dangerous adventures if the United States and its allies are willing to pay the price. Sound policy will require strength, determination, and patience. It will aim at deterrence of war, containment of the power of the Soviet Union and its satellites, and its diminution when reasonable opportunities present themselves. Containment is necessary because unchecked Soviet expansion is dangerous both strategically and psychologically. The USSR's gains in allies, resources, and locations having strategic value increase its capacity to challenge the West at the same time as it weakens the West's capacity to resist. The psychological effects of further changes in the balance of power in the Soviets' favor are too obvious to need description. At some point concessions made from good will and hopeful expectations become retreats made from fear. The outcome is less likely to be surrender than a sudden reversal, confrontation, and disaster.

Containment sheltered by deterrence, however, can work. The definition of success should not be utopian. The lion will not lie down with the lamb. The Soviet Union will not soon collapse from its internal problems, change its view of the world, or abandon its ambitions, although there is much to be said for trying to assist the disintegration of the Soviet empire when good opportunities arise. It is not impossible that unforeseen events may some day bring changes that would make the world a better and safer place. If not, we may hope, at least, that the Soviets after some period of time will realize they cannot have their way. As George Kennan once said, "no mystical messianic movement, and particularly not that of the Kremlin, can face frustration indefinitely without adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs." In the 16th and 17th centuries European Catholics and Protestants tried with all their might to exterminate their opponents and their beliefs. They reluctantly abandoned the attempt not because they had seen the light of restraint and toleration but because they were exhausted and convinced they could not succeed. We may hope that a firm, constant policy of containment and deterrence will produce a similar result without bloodshed and perhaps even that some future Peace of Westphalia will make peace official.

BUT this is a prescription difficult for the Western democracies to take. It requires them to understand that serious problems of foreign policy are with them for the foreseeable future and that military preparations at a high cost will be required for success. They must achieve and maintain a credible array of nuclear weapons and defensive systems to deter Soviet adventurism, even though technological change will continue to make those weapons obsolete and require new ones. They must support armies, navies, and air forces adequate to make conventional adventures unattractive. On occasion they must resist Soviet-supported rebellions that threaten important interests and be willing to use their own armies when needed for the purpose.

All of that runs against the grain and is terribly difficult in free societies that enjoy the luxuries of economies designed for the pleasure and happiness of their people and systems of political competition in which the material advancement of the citizens has very high priority and in which the illusion persists that isolation is still possible. But the 20th has been a hard century, and the 21st will be no less hard. The study of our two analogies suggests that nothing short of an honest look at reality and a responding change in behavior will be needed for survival.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Modern Ideologies & the Jews

Alain Besançon

For Europeans, broadly speaking, the history of Christianity commingles nicely with history-in-general. By contrast, the story of the Jews is frequently considered a matter apart. After all, the Jews themselves, with their own language and customs, were a community set off from the rest of Christian Europe at least until the 18th century, and throughout this period they were not overly eager to call attention to themselves, or even to participate much in the outside world. Moreover, until the present time Jewish historiography itself tended, in the main, toward martyrology and/or apologetics and/or the memorialization of individual Jewish communities. Indeed we still do not have, so far as I am aware, a definitive work placing the Jews within the general context of the history of our times (by which I mean the 19th and 20th centuries).

Perhaps, indeed, this is why we still lack an appreciation of the extent to which the century of the Holocaust has also been the most glorious century of Jewish achievement since Solomon. Without reference to the Jews, one simply cannot account for modern science and philosophy or for a host of social and political phenomena that are obviously of interest to everyone. I would go so far as to suggest that in the last two centuries there has not been a single human endeavor, good or bad, in which the Jews did not play a part. In this sense the history of the Jews has become inseparable from the larger history of our times. And just as Christians, if they misapprehend Judaism, will fail to gain a true and complete understanding of their own religion, so the neglect of modern Jewish history renders modern Europe incomprehensible.

At the end of the 15th century, there were only a few hundred thousand Jews in the world. Of these, 200,000 were among those who had been expelled from Spain and who settled in North Africa and the Ottoman empire, thus dropping out of mainstream European history for several centuries. Some 30,000 remained in Southern Europe, and to these must be added a few thousand who went to Holland. There were, however, virtually no Jews to speak of in France, England, Italy, or Iberia. By contrast, about 300,000 Jews inhabited the states of Germany, particularly in the principal Jewish sanctuary, Poland-Lithuania.

By the end of the 18th century the world Jewish population had grown to a million: 300,000 in the Ottoman empire, 700,000 in Poland and the German states. When Poland was divided, Polish Jews were split into Russian, Prussian, and Austrian branches.

There was great demographic progress in the 19th century, and by 1913, the world Jewish population had climbed to 14 million. The major centers were now the U.S. (3.5 million) and the Russian empire (6.5 million). In addition, there were about half-a-million in Germany, a million in Austria-Hungary, with a strong concentration in Galicia. Western Europe remained for the most part empty by comparison: there were about 100,000 Jews in France and England, about 30,000 in Italy.

Entering the modern world, the Jews were sharply aware of the hardships they had suffered during the Christian centuries. There had been expulsions from France and England; there had been massacres at the time of the Crusades and during the period of the Black Death; there had been the expulsion from Spain and the persecution of the Marranos. And, in the middle of the 17th century, there had been Chmelnicki, who with his Cossack bands may have killed as many as 100,000 Jews, a third of Polish Jewry. Murder was not all: Jews everywhere were second-class citizens, held in contempt by their neighbors.

Until well into the modern era, the overwhelming majority of Jews and Christians lived apart from one another. There were, on the one side, the restrictive and discriminating laws of state, church, and society, symbolized in the walls of the ghetto; on the other side, the fence around the Torah, the dietary rules of *kashrut*, and rabbinical injunctions all did their part to limit outside contacts and exchanges. Different calendars were followed; even the time of day was calculated dif-

Alain Besançon is professor of the History of Russian Culture at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris and the author of *The Rise of the Gulag: The Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, among other books. The present article, in a somewhat different version, originally appeared in the French magazine *Commentaire*, Summer 1986. It has been translated by Roger Kaplan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ferently. There were few intellectual contacts. Although Jewish boys received the best education in Europe, it was *sui generis*, aimed at the absorption and interpretation of sacred texts. It was a *lectio divina*, of the kind reserved in the Christian world for monks. However, it produced formidable mental skills which, following emancipation, would be applied brilliantly to the secular disciplines.

Jewish and Christian philosophers in the Middle Ages knew, to some degree, of one another's work. Thomas Aquinas refers to Maimonides, and there were, reciprocally, Jewish "Thomists." When, after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, Jewish religious thought jettisoned rationalist philosophy and tended to favor mysticism, this too found parallel currents in Renaissance Europe, whose Christian philosophers were attracted to the Neoplatonism of the Kabbalah when and where they encountered it. But then, in the early 17th century, with Descartes, there occurred a revolution in thinking that raised the curtain on the modern world. From Descartes to Kant, passing through Newton and Hume, the intellectual landscape changed completely. With the exception of Spinoza, Jewish thinkers did not pay attention to this revolution. In Poland, the Jewish masses and elites alike were taken up for decades in the convulsions provoked by the false-messiah Sabbetai Zevi, who appeared in the aftermath of the Chmelnicki catastrophe. This was followed in turn by the rise of Hasidism, a pietistic, theosophical, and esoteric movement, and by the struggle between it and the rabbis who opposed it.

As a result of all this, the Haskalah—the Jewish Enlightenment—involved a radical rupture not only with traditional habits and beliefs but with the fundamental vision according to which Jews had long understood the world. To have missed the 17th century, so to speak, was a severe intellectual handicap. And as compared with other European peoples who were "late" arriving in the modern world, the Jews who discovered the Enlightenment ran the additional risk of becoming alienated dangerously from their own community.

To be sure, even in Western Europe the Jewish masses (as opposed to de-ghettoized minorities) long remained attached to traditional practices and beliefs, while in Eastern Europe traditional ways remained for the most part undisturbed. In the West, despite the rapid advance of secularization, as long as Jewish identity was not challenged or discarded, religion served, as ever, to define the Jews as Jews. The debates over what it meant to be Jewish were of little or no interest to the majority of Jews, who were content to make use of the new opportunities opened up by the process of emancipation and who wanted from the larger society only respect and friendship, as would any other ethnic minority.

But there were forces abroad—especially the forces of nationalism and socialism—to make even this minimal expectation problematic.

> "The liberal state," writes the historian J.L. Talmon,
>
> which accorded full rights to its Jewish citizens on the same basis as to all others, including freedom of economic pursuit, a share in the running of the nation's affairs, took its stand on the theory of a social contract concluded between men of reason. Racial origin, religious affiliation, social class, and all those deep but elusive differences, rooted in and exemplified by habit and custom, reflex and prejudice, instinct and frame of mind, disposition and manner of reasoning, which separate and isolate men, were considered irrelevant, when compared with the forces of conscious deliberating reason. On the other hand, the texture of the liberal state was limited from its very inception to a legal framework. Outside it, the citizen was free to follow his own judgment. Such a regime was ideal for the Jews: but to their misfortune it never even came into being.

It may indeed have come into being in the United States, the Western country where Jews have been happiest. But in Europe, the liberal state Talmon describes was blocked by nationalism and socialism. For the Jews, these two forces constituted threats—and also temptations.

Nationalism in its classic form took hold in the late 18th century, and immediately forked off in contradictory directions. Revolutionary France stood for the idea of an egalitarian society in which citizens determined among themselves the public interest; this is what Talmon calls the "politico-rational" model of nationalism. The German model, by contrast, is rooted in an emotional apprehension of history according to which language, soil, and race endow each people with a genius all its own.

These two forms of nationalism, the first predominant in the West, the second in the East, could be, and were, combined in many ways. Together and separately they offered a substitute for a Christianity that no longer aroused the passion of the new European elites. In France (and for that matter in the U.S.), nationalism had a universalist component: what was good for the nation was good for all other peoples as well. But in Germany and Russia, it was held that history was moving toward the special election of a particular nation. A similar view was held by the Poles, who claimed theirs was the Christ of nations.

Where did the Jews fit in all this? In France after the Revolution, they were viewed as ordinary citizens, offered the same rights and duties as everyone else. The only thing that was not acceptable was to belong to another people. To many Jews the deal was irresistible and they embraced the patriotic cause enthusiastically. Yet

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accepting such a national contract pushed the Jews away from their own historical self-definition as a religious *people*, and toward complete assimilation.

By contrast, German and Russian nationalism left no room for Jews at all, either as a people or as individuals. Organic unity meant that foreign bodies should be purged. Moreover, in religious terms, a nation that took on a messianic mission competed by definition with the old idea of the Jews as the Chosen People. Hence, whereas the contractual nationalism of the West liberated the Jews from Christian anti-Semitism (at least in theory), the organic nationalism of the East filled itself with anti-Semitism, drank of it, and gave it a fresh impetus. This sort of nationalism often called itself Christian, although it could as easily substitute a "scientific" formula for its religious component. At this point it would become openly racist, setting out to achieve national integrity through the elimination of "evil," i.e., the Jews. This, indeed, was the logic of the Final Solution, a logic to which the only response was flight or, where possible, fight.

THE other idea simultaneously beckoning and repulsing the Jews was socialism in its various guises.

In France and England, countries where the liberal state developed to some degree or other and where Jews assimilated more or less well, there was nothing special about socialism as an ideological calling. Jews found it attractive, or did not—the same as everyone else. As a political rallying point it promised an end to injustice and exploitation, the reorganization of society along rational lines, liberation from want. All this seemed in keeping with the spirit of biblical prophecy and Jewish ethical teachings, and it is not surprising that many Jews took part in the early socialist movements, Saint-Simon's as well as Marx's, when these did not emphasize anti-Semitism (as did Proudhon and Toussenel). Christians, Jews, agnostics—to all, socialism offered a universalist progressivism, laced with a nostalgia for the kind of life-in-community the modern world had done away with.

In Germany, social democracy had other virtues as well. In an "old regime" not yet really modern, where full participation in public affairs was still a distant goal for ethnic minorities and for the working class (which counted many Jews), socialism was the vanguard of the democratic idea. Moreover, it was internationalist in outlook, and seemed to stand against that reactionary German nationalism which had a strong anti-Jewish component. In Austria-Hungary, socialism even offered a solution to the national problem, a political value that transcended linguistic and territorial bases.

Farther to the East, where most Jews lived, the socialist movement took on a much more radical coloration. Russia was the place most distant from liberalism, and Jews, subject to legal discrimination and victimized by mass anti-Semitic movements, were acutely aware of the fact. It is thus no surprise that Jews should have been active in both the social-democratic and the populist wings of the Russian revolutionary movement. But they were neither its leaders nor its major theoreticians. The revolutionary movement had a European pedigree, which had been reshaped by the Russian intelligentsia before Jews entered it. And even once within the movement, Jews as a rule avoided the more extreme factions. In the Polish and Baltic areas, for example, they formed the Bund, a specifically Jewish socialist movement which also happened to be the only authentic workingman's movement in all of the Russian empire. Following the example of German social democracy, the Bund gradually rejected revolutionism and utopianism in favor of the real interests of the Jewish workers in the empire. When the split in the Russian radical movement occurred, most Jewish social democrats favored the more moderate Mensheviks over the Bolsheviks.

To be sure, Jews were also numerous in Lenin's faction, and even held leadership positions. This requires a comment. It is true that the same reasons impelling one to join *a* socialist movement—the desire to fight injustice and to bring about a freer and better world—could be given for joining the Bolsheviks. Still, one had to be willfully blind or very badly informed to believe that the Bolsheviks favored liberty and justice in the sense that Western social democrats understood these terms. There had to be other factors at work. Primary was faith in the absolute truth of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, which offered a complete and "scientific" explanation of the world and of history, commanded the destruction of the present order down to its very foundations, and promised a future world without evil.

From a Jewish viewpoint, Marxism-Leninism rested on a rejection of the God of Abraham as well as of the Law and the concept of the Chosen People, offering in their stead a newly homogeneous and reconciled humanity in which there would be, as it were, neither Jew nor Greek. True, Marxism-Leninism also appeared to promise the fulfillment of several messianic prophecies, albeit by human—i.e., political—means, and in perverse forms. (How could one even speak of justice in a system in which social and historical determinism took the place of free will and personal responsibility?) But the supposed messianic impulse in Marxism-Leninism underscores the question, much canvassed by both friendly and hostile commentators, of the degree to which the theory itself is "Jewish" in character.

Marx's own Jewishness is among the least important sources of Marxism: as has often been noted, this son of a convert to Christianity was himself anti-Semitic to a certain degree. More-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over, neither Feuerbach, Büchner, Chernyshevsky, Plekhanov, nor any of Lenin's other intellectual forebears was Jewish; nor, of course, was Lenin himself. Millenarian messianism is as much rooted in Christianity as in Judaism—actually, the roots are the same—and the crisis of Christianity, which began in the 17th century, was of greater significance to the elaboration of totalitarianism than was the corresponding crisis of Judaism.

To explain the attraction of Jewish intellectuals to Leninism some have proposed a resemblance between Leninist doctrine and certain trends in the mystical thought of the Kabbalah. Thus, there is in Leninism a classic gnostic outlook, based on schemes of threes and twos: time is divided into the period before the fall, the period of the fall, and the period after the fall; then there are the two opposed sides, good and evil, and the war between them is the main event of the third period. Something like this sort of thing can be traced in Jewish apocalyptic writings from ancient days, and elements are also to be found in the doctrines of Isaac Luria, the 16th-century Jewish kabbalist whose teachings, popularized and psychologized by the Hasidim in the 18th century, nurtured the spiritual lives of large sectors of the Jewish masses.

The facts, however, tell a different story. Leninism is characterized by a hatred of the world as it is; this is an orientation it has in common with the Christian heresy of Manicheanism but one that is foreign to Judaism in any of its variants. And in any event, an examination of the social backgrounds of Jewish revolutionaries shows that few if any came from circles in which the Kabbalah was influential. On the contrary, they sprang from families one or two generations into secularism, and more often than not they picked up the new ideological doctrines at secondary school or at university. They were, in effect, continuing—and radicalizing—the process of the Enlightenment.

The Jewish militant who joined a revolutionary movement brought upon himself unresolvable contradictions. He could, of course, plead that he was being in some sense loyal to his people; indeed, the termination of the injustices to which Jews were subjected was one frequently advanced rationale for joining the cause. But it was also an act of disloyalty, if perhaps unthinking disloyalty, to join a movement that aimed at the disappearance of the Jews and their distinctive traditions. Many Jews in this period were weary of being different; in its own way, as we have seen, Leninist ideology promised to end their apartness by reconciling Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, in an undifferentiated human totality. In other words, radical ideology offered a new kind of universalism, one free of Christianity and Judaism alike; in so doing, it released Jews from the burden of the Torah and the often suffocating environment of the *shtetl*. Jews who were attracted to it could not foresee that Communist ideology would seek to destroy all that was not Communism: in the final analysis, everything real, including civil society, the Church, and the Jews and Judaism as well.

Only a small minority of the Jewish people became active in the Communist movement. The majority not only stood apart from it, they became its chosen victims. And many of those who mounted the moral and intellectual effort both to understand and to resist Communism were, and continue to be, Jews. Still, the highly visible participation of some Jews in the international Communist movement was of great consequence, especially outside the Soviet Union, if only because it furnished anti-Semites with fresh and powerful arguments concerning the sinister activities of "international Jewry." Anti-Communism was of use to Hitler; it helped him achieve power, it served as a cover for his anti-Semitism, and confused many.

As long as they had been kept out of the mainstream of world history, the Jews were not implicated in crimes committed by Christians. Returning now to the historical stage, they seemed to have gotten mixed up in a disastrous and in the final analysis criminal enterprise. It is surely conceivable that in the 1930's, in response to the deadly threat represented by Hitler, some Jews felt they must, as Churchill said, enter into a pact with the devil. And yet one cannot help regretting that the Jewish impact on modern European history should be identified in so many minds with left-wing radicalism. Thus did secularization introduce into the Jewish world all the ills of Europe, in every area.

BUT then there was Zionism. "The Jewish question," wrote Theodor Herzl in 1896,

> exists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Where it does not exist, it is brought in together with Jewish immigrants. Naturally we move where we are not persecuted; our appearance then gives rise to persecution. This is a fact and is bound to remain a fact everywhere, even in highly developed countries—France is a case in point—as long as the Jewish question is not solved politically.

Born in Hungary and a resident of Vienna, where the liberal state was far from fully developed, Herzl romanticized the Jewish situation in France and England. Thus the Dreyfus Affair came as a shock to him; he may even have exaggerated its significance. But henceforth he was to see no hope in assimilation. "Everywhere," he wrote,

> we have sincerely endeavored to merge with the national communities surrounding us and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, in some places even extravagantly so; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we strive to enhance the face of our native countries in the arts and sciences, or their wealth through trade and commerce. In our native lands where, after all, we too have lived for centuries, we are decried as aliens, often by people whose ancestors had not yet come to the country when our fathers' sighs were already heard in the land.

Under Herzl's leadership, political Zionism became a reality. For its early founders, Zionism was the answer both to the "question of the Jews" and to the "Jewish question." As a practical matter, it offered salvation from persecution at the hands of the Gentiles; from a moral point of view, it would cleanse the Jews of the scars and traumas of *galut* (exile). As a political movement, Zionism aimed for a Jewish state and nation, and in this aim it proved successful when, after endless tragedy and travail and finally the Holocaust, the state of Israel was proclaimed on May 14, 1948.

Today three million Jews live in Israel. Since this figure represents only about 20 percent of world Jewry, it is a long way from the great ingathering envisioned by the early Zionists. For the time being, most Jews, whether because they are not allowed to go or because they do not wish to go, continue to live elsewhere than Israel. Nonetheless, the Zionist project and the state of Israel have had a profound effect on Judaism and Jewish existence.

In a sense, Zionism was inspired by both European nationalism and European socialism.

Since the liberal nationalist state failed, as Annie Kriegel has put it, "to prevent the persecution of those who thought they would no longer be defined as Jews," it seemed only sensible to try to create a national liberal state of one's own. This was the modern spirit—whose advantages Jews perceived well—applied to one's own interests.

Something similar may be said about the other variant of nationalism, the romantic or organic one. Excluded from other people's nationalisms, the Jews found, through Zionism, their own. And Zionism, as J.L. Talmon observes, contains elements of them all: "The aura of ancient myth and the vision of renovation which constituted the unique appeal of the Greek war of independence; the theoretical, not to say metaphysical, elaboration of national ideology in 19th-century Germany; the missionary idealism of the Italian Risorgimento . . . ; the dogged romantic desperation of the Irish and the Poles; the cultural and literary renaissance of the Slav peoples. . . ."

As for socialism, which had promised an entirely different kind of assimilation, even after the triumph, in the USSR, of socialism with an inhuman face, Zionism continued to hold out the possibility of a "good," i.e., democratic, kind of socialism—good in itself, and good for the Jews.

The building of Israel consequently involved cooperation, as well as competition, among liberals like Chaim Weizmann, romantic nationalists like Zev Jabotinsky, and socialists in the Russian tradition like David Ben-Gurion.

IT MIGHT be said that, what with all these borrowings, Jews in effect finally became Europeans—and it might also be said that the Jews brought all the poisons of Babylon to the shores of the Jordan. This, indeed, is one of the main arguments of anti-Zionists, who accuse Israel in turn of being capitalist, socialist, nationalist, racist, colonialist—all the sins routinely blamed on the West. In fact, however, Zionism is more than nationalism and socialism. It also contains their corrective.

As practiced in Israel, socialism is subordinated to the higher principle of democracy. Utopian socialism now is finished, and even moderate economic socialism is running out of steam. Under such conditions, socialism has become in effect just another name for the pursuit of justice and democracy. And as for Zionist nationalism, it differs from other nationalisms in a fundamental respect, one that again underscores the difference between Israel and the nations. When Herzl proposed in 1903 that the Zionist movement consider Uganda as one possible site for the Jewish national home, he was strenuously and decisively opposed. Geography was not a matter of convenience: Zion was conceivable only in Zion.

The nationalisms of the Germans and the Slavs were founded on myths and, when all is said and done, on lies. By contrast, the claims of the Bible and its traditions were and are recognized as genuine outside the Jewish world—at least, in part of the Christian world. Whatever the Zionists, with their thrust toward "normalization," may have wanted, it has not proved possible to do away with the concept of the Chosenness of Israel. Many Zionists do not "believe" in the Bible, but the Bible with its promise is the basis of Zionist nationalism.

Indeed, Zionist nationalism even in its most secular form unmasks a truth about romantic nationalism altogether, namely, its perverse attempt to imitate the Election of Israel. By the same token, the Zionist idea works on Jewish nationalism from within to remove it from its European model, which is but the imitation of an imitation. Finally, the Zionist idea unmasks the true nature —or, rather, the false nature—of that abstract universalism, liberal or socialist, into which modern Jews have been tempted from time to time to dissolve themselves.

IT IS written in Exodus that the Jews brought to Canaan the "plunder of the Egyptians." To Israel they brought the plunder of the Europeans, from which there was bound to be taken some good, some bad. But they also brought something completely their own, and it has proved the decisive thing. That is where we are today.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Schlesinger Thesis

Kenneth S. Lynn

ONCE upon a time, the books of the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. were worth reading. In *The Vital Center* (1949), for instance, he spoke with a fog-cutting scorn of those "progressives" who still clung to the miasmic dreams of the 1930's and were still blind, in consequence, to Soviet imperialism and the malevolence of the American Communist party. The modern liberalism which he represented was much more tough-minded. Thanks to a "restoration of radical nerve," he explained, in words that revealed how much he owed to the wisdom of Reinhold Niebuhr, modern liberalism recognized the complexity of reality, the ineradicable sinfulness of human nature, the corruptive consequences of power, the narrow possibilities of all historical endeavor, the virtues of gradualism, and the horror inherent in every form of totalitarianism.

Today, having lost his nerve and so much else, Schlesinger speaks of the United States and the Soviet Union in the same breath as "international menaces," acting out fantasies of "innate superiority." In the American case, Schlesinger argues in his new book, *The Cycles of American History*,* a messianic dream of America as the redeemer nation has flowed into the vacuum created in the national mind by the erosion of our sense of history and its attendant consciousness that all secular communities are finite and flawed. So far as interest and knowledge are concerned, we have become "an essentially historyless people," the author of *Cycles* complains. "Businessmen agree with the elder Henry Ford that history is bunk. The young no longer study history. Academics turn their back on history in the enthusiasm for the ahistorical behavioral 'sciences.' "

Precisely which contemporary businessmen the professor has in mind, he does not say—for the simple reason that he hasn't any; in characterizing their attitude by reference to a drearily familiar wisecrack tossed off by an automobile tycoon born in 1863, Schlesinger is not telling us something he has actually learned about executives in Lee Iacocca's Detroit and elsewhere; to the contrary, he is merely indulging an animus, on the flip side of which can be found, not incidentally, a striking tendency to worship men of inherited wealth, such as Averell Harriman, to whom *Cycles* is dedicated. " 'My father always told me that businessmen were sons-of-bitches,' " the author of *Cycles* remembers John F. Kennedy saying in 1962, at the time of the young President's wage-price battle with the steel companies, and the relish with which Schlesinger repeats that unlovely epithet testifies to his own belief in its applicability to the social class in question.

But what is even more revealing about Schlesinger than his willingness to rely on prejudice instead of evidence in his judgment of businessmen is his unwillingness to engage in self-criticism while lamenting the current state of affairs in academia. For although there is truth in his assertion that students nowadays have a diminished interest in history and that many scholars prefer to work in the behavioral sciences, he need not have turned to grandiosely vague allusions to a national "tradition" of "narcissistic withdrawal from history" in order to account for these developments. More modestly and more usefully, he might have begun by asking whether the faded appeal of history in our colleges and universities is not the result of intellectual disorder in the historical profession, and from there he might have proceeded to take a hard look at his own special field of 20th-century American political history, which has declined to the point where senior-faculty positions in the field have gone unfilled at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and other institutions, for want of candidates who have proved themselves as scholars. How, and when, and why, did the discipline fall into such woeful difficulty? Conceivably, the author of *Cycles* could have filled at least a chapter with enlightening answers to these questions, except that doing so would have required him to rethink his most cherished assumptions about the American past.

THE academicians who came to dominate 20th-century American political history in the decade

KENNETH S. LYNN, formerly professor of English and chairman of the American Civilization program at Harvard, is now the Arthur O. Lovejoy Professor of History at Johns Hopkins. His critical study of Ernest Hemingway's life and work will be published this summer by Simon & Schuster.

* Houghton Mifflin, 498 pp., $22.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and a half after World War II—Schlesinger at Harvard, Walter Johnson at the University of Chicago, Eric Goldman at Princeton, Frank Freidel at Stanford and Harvard, John Morton Blum at MIT and Yale, and William Leuchtenburg at Columbia may be taken as gifted representatives of the type—were men who had grown up during the New Deal and had been indelibly marked by their enthusiasm for it. Some of them, indeed, became personally involved in liberal politics. Walter Johnson played a role in persuading the Hamlet-like governor of Illinois to run for President, a feat which he later described in *How We Drafted Adlai Stevenson* (1955). Among Schlesinger's many *engagé* acts was his work as a speechwriter for Stevenson. Leuchtenburg held directorial posts both in New England and New York with the liberal pressure group, Americans for Democratic Action, and with New York's Liberal party as well. Goldman, in the fullness of time, would serve as a special consultant in Lyndon Johnson's White House.

Much more significant, though, is the fact that fond memories of FDR constricted the sense of history of this group of historians, whether they concentrated on the boom-and-bust years between the world wars, or on the era of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, or attempted to cover the whole first half of the century. In the collective view of these chroniclers, the most exciting way to tell the story of 20th-century America was to orchestrate it around what they regarded as the intermittent triumph of presidentially-conducted crusades for reform, with true reform being equated in their minds with the unfolding agenda of liberal thought.

From Johnson's portrayal in charming detail of *William Allen White's America* (1947) to Leuchtenburg's clear and thoughtful survey, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1963), the group published a stream of books. Goldman's panoramic *Rendezvous With Destiny* appeared in 1952, along with the first of the three solidly documented biographical volumes on the early FDR that Freidel would produce in the 50's. During the close-out year—1954—of his associate editorship of eight volumes of Theodore Roosevelt's letters, Blum deftly distilled his encyclopedic knowledge of TR's Presidency into *The Republican Roosevelt*. In 1957, Schlesinger launched a projected multivolume study of the age of Franklin Roosevelt by dramatically recounting *The Crisis of the Old Order: 1919-1933*, and he reached even higher levels of narrative tension in *The Coming of the New Deal* (1959) and *The Politics of Upheaval* (1960), the latter a recreation of the turbulence of 1935-36.

The blurb by Blum on the back of the dust jacket of *The Politics of Upheaval* represented the sort of encomium that Schlesinger's Rooseveltian labors had already accustomed him to, and that served to set his work somewhat apart from that of his confreres, even though their books, too, were extremely well received. "As he has before," glowed Blum,

> the author in this book commands the complexity, the contradictions, the vibrancy of the New Deal years. His astute judgments and his skillful organization clarify the meaning of those years for Americans then and now. His literary talents, unsurpassed among historians, recreate the richness and vitality of the period. He is the master of the vignette. Here are incisive portraits of Father Coughlin, Huey Long, Alf Landon, and the New Dealers, too. Here, above all, Franklin Roosevelt moves through history, now indecisive, now grandly constructive, always marvelously alive. This is an indispensable book for all Americans, not just for historians.

YET for all the compliments that were lavished on their work, these liberal rhapsodists did not have much success with the best graduate students of the period. With only a scattering of exceptions, none of the young people with genuine historical interests was drawn more than briefly to their specialty, while the broad-gauged students who viewed political history as an aspect of social, economic, or intellectual history generally chose to write their dissertations in the latter disciplines under mentors who had their political allegiances, whatever they may have been, under firm control. Thus, the mediocritization of 20th-century American political history began thirty years ago with the failure of a group of specialists in the field to accumulate a critical mass of recruits who came up to their own level of analytical competence, flawed though it was. And the most likely reason for their pedagogical failure was the political bias that drastically narrowed their conceptions of what reform was and kept them from seeing that in modern America virtually every President has been a reformer. There was good theater, to be sure, in the group's vision of marvelously alive liberal leaders summoning the electorate to one rendezvous with destiny after another, but as a means of cutting into and understanding American history, it was an instrument of limited usefulness, and most of the intellectually sophisticated graduate students—that saving remnant—avoided having it thrust upon them.

The group's theoretical assumptions were buried in the stuff of their work and did not receive explicit statement as a creed—except by Schlesinger, whose favorite smear word, ironically, is dogma. Not only did he enunciate his black-and-white ideas, but he claimed that they applied to the whole sweep of American history. "Every great crisis thus far in American history," Schlesinger wrote in the closing pages of *The Age of Jackson* (1945), the book that brought him a permanent appointment at Harvard well before he was thirty,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> has produced a leader adequate to the occasion from the ranks of those who believe vigorously and seriously in liberty, democracy, and the common man. . . . In the past, when liberalism has resolved the crisis and restored tranquillity, conservatism has recovered power by the laws of political gravity; then it makes a new botch of things, and liberalism again must take over in the name of the nation. But the object of liberalism has never been to destroy capitalism, as conservatism invariably claims—only to keep the capitalists from destroying it.

Although the author of *Cycles* deplores those who conceive of America as a redeemer nation with a mission to save the world, he himself passionately believes that liberalism has been the historic redeemer of America.

SCHLESINGER acquired his Manichean model of the American past from his historian father, Arthur Meier Schlesinger. As early as 1924 (when his precocious son was a lad of seven), the elder Schlesinger set forth in a lecture his growing conviction that American history had always been bound, and would forever be, by an oscillation of political sentiment between periods of concern for the rights of the few and periods of concern for the wrongs of the many, between eras of quietude and rapid movement, between emphasis on the welfare of human beings and the welfare of property. In 1939, after six years of the New Deal (whose advent he was sure he had predicted), Harvard Professor Schlesinger was more confident than ever that his theory was right, at which point he elaborated it in an essay in the *Yale Review*, entitled "The Tides of National Politics." Ten years later, he updated the essay and collected it in *Paths to the Present*.

Beginning with the Stamp Act Congress of 1765, the elder Schlesinger found that American history had gone through eleven alternating periods of liberalism and conservatism lasting an average of 16.55 years. The latest period of liberalism had begun in 1931, when the Democrats took over the House of Representatives to the discomfiture of President Hoover, and terminated in 1947, the year in which a Republican-controlled Congress "proceeded to reorient the country in a conservative direction." (For some reason, the author of *Paths to the Present* did not regard Truman's upset victory over Dewey in 1948 as a new lease on life for liberalism. Could it be that *Paths to the Present* had gone to press before the election?) Major deviations in the time span had occurred only in two instances: the eight-year "liberal span" from 1861 to 1869, encompassing the Lincoln and Andrew Johnson administrations, and the ensuing "thirty-two-year reign of conservatism" ending with the assassination of William McKinley in 1901. The likelihood of further deviations was not great, in Schlesinger *père*'s judgment: ". . . [W]e may expect the recession from liberalism which began in 1947 to last till 1962, with a possible margin of a year or two in one direction or the other." "The next conservative epoch," the Nostradamus of Harvard proclaimed, "will then be due around 1978."*

What generates these mass drifts of sentiment? the elder Schlesinger asked himself. No observable correlation existed with the peaks and valleys of the business cycle, he was honest enough to observe; two bad depressions had occurred in the 1869-1901 period without cessation in the "groundswell of conservatism," while the New Deal had held sway in an interval of almost unrelieved bad times. Nor was there any correlation, he continued, with foreign wars, or with enlargements of the electorate, or with the physical growth of the country, or with improvements in transportation and communication. Finally, in his puzzlement, he fell back on mass psychology, a difficult subject to deal with in the best of circumstances and especially so for a historian known for his suspicion of Freud and other explorers of the invisible world of the psyche. The oscillations spring from "something basic in human nature," Professor Schlesinger vaguely ventured. "Apparently the electorate embarks upon conservative policies till it is disappointed or vexed or bored and then attaches itself to liberal policies till a like course is run."

But if human nature was the key to the shifts, why did the electorate get bored at a different rate of speed from the electorates in other democracies? And what did the terms used to describe the shifts mean anyhow? What did it mean to say that Lincoln's Presidency was liberal, when everything in his administration from the day it began was subordinate to the conservative cause of preserving the Union? What sense was there in characterizing the post-Civil War period as an "era of quietude," when even Professor Schlesinger had to admit (albeit in a vocabulary scarcely in touch with the well-nigh revolutionary industrial violence of the late 1870's) that "the years from 1869 to 1901 were constantly disrupted by the reform agitation of agrarian groups and labor elements"?

"The Tides of National Politics," in sum, was a murky piece of work which raised far more question about the dynamics of American politics than it answered. But perhaps the least well-thought-out aspect of the essay had to do with the explanation of why the author preferred the image of a spiral to that of a pendulum as a symbol of the oscillation process. The chief gov-

* This sentence and the one preceding it are also quoted in *Cycles*—in mangled form. Moreover, the author's footnote on them refers us to page 97 of the 1949 edition of *Paths to the Present*, whereas they actually appear on page 85. All three of his other footnote citations of that book are likewise inaccurate. The time when Schlesinger, Jr. was justly renowned for his infallibility in such matters is no more, sad to say.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ernmental gains of any liberal era, Professor Schlesinger pointed out with unalloyed satisfaction in his voice, generally remain on the statute books when the conservatives recover power, and are duly added to when the liberals come back into office, with the result that "liberalism grows constantly more liberal and, by the same token, conservatism grows constantly less conservative." Hence the aptness of the spiral image. But was there a point at which the spiraling expansion in the size of the federal government would fundamentally alter the nature of the government, so that no democratic leader would be able to make himself master of it? Alas, the question never came up in *Paths to the Present*, even though by 1949 a bureaucratic political order was clearly emerging in Washington, D.C., in fulfillment of James Burnham's somber prophecy eight years earlier that the United States was destined to endure a "managerial revolution."

IN THE course of his career, the elder Schlesinger had written some highly valuable books and articles, most of them dealing with social and economic issues and ranging impressively over two hundred years of American history. Thus there was ample reason for his son to be proud of him, even if he found "The Tides of National Politics" embarrassing. But in fact he did not find it so, for the degree of identification between father and son would seem to have been so intense as to preclude such a disagreement. At birth, the son had been named Arthur Bancroft Schlesinger, in honor of his mother, a collateral descendant of the historian George Bancroft, as well as of his father. But when he was eleven or twelve, dusty volumes of *Who's Who in America* reveal, it was decided—presumably with the concurrence of all concerned—that he would thenceforward be known as Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Jr. To this day he still signs himself Junior—and still thinks of himself as the "legatee," to use his own word, of the theory of American history propounded by his father.

Thus, in *The Age of Jackson*, the first and by far the best of his big books, the twenty-eight-year-old younger Schlesinger made a whole era come alive by dint of keen attention to ideas and a perspicacious evocation of a host of individuals of different political stripes—and yet was dead wrong in his central thesis. "Jacksonian democracy," he insisted, "was . . . a second American phase of that enduring struggle between the business community and the rest of society which is the guarantee of freedom in a liberal capitalist state." How could such an alert historian have been incapable of figuring out that the democratic surge of Jacksonism was intimately linked to the expansion of wide-open, laissez-faire capitalism and was not a phase in the restraint thereof? Part of the answer is that his devotion to Franklin Roosevelt led him to conceive of Jacksonian democracy as an earlier version of the New Deal. But the young author's false thesis mainly derived from an even more intense devotion. In the *Yale Review* version of "The Tides of National Politics," published six years before *The Age of Jackson*, the years 1829-1841 had been denominated as a period in which emphasis on the welfare of property had given way to an emphasis on human welfare, and for Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., that was that.

At times in his age-of-Roosevelt series Schlesinger again showed that he was capable of a bias-free perspicacity, as in his splendid sketch of Alf Landon. And although his basic judgments of leading New Dealers were all too often predictable, he sometimes dressed them out with fascinating qualifications, even in the case of Roosevelt, while his trackings of the permutations of New Deal policy were admirably careful and clear. As noted earlier, John Morton Blum in his blurb called the third volume of the series an indispensable book for all Americans; indispensable or not, *The Politics of Upheaval* surely kindled an eagerness in thousands of American readers for the volumes that would carry the story forward to Roosevelt's death in 1945 and possibly as far as the end of the Truman administration—for had not the time span of *The Age of Jackson* extended through Van Buren's Presidency and beyond?

The Politics of Upheaval, however, came out in the same year John F. Kennedy was elected President. Following that event, various liberal historians were quick to compare JFK to TR and FDR. Here once more was a leader in the heroic mold of other liberal Presidents of the century. For Schlesinger, though, the Kennedy victory had an even headier meaning. Schlesinger *père*'s historical timetable had called for a new liberal tide to come in in the early 1960's and here it was, more or less right on schedule. By the ineluctable laws of human nature that ruled American politics, a liberal hegemony of 16.55 years was clearly about to begin.

In the coruscating opening pages of *The Best and the Brightest* (1974), David Halberstam argues that the hubris of the New Frontiersmen was rooted in the good breeding and cerebral hotshotism to which his title refers. But certainly in Schlesinger's case, if not in others as well, lack of humility also derived from an intoxicating sense of moving to the beat of a powerful historical pulse. Reinhold Niebuhr, of course, had warned of the perennial tragedy of human history. Still and all, to a true believer in "Tides" the prospects for liberal governance looked extraordinarily bright, and never more so than on the gray, chilly afternoon of January 9, 1961, in Schlesinger's house on Irving Street in Cambridge, when the President-elect at last asked his host if he was ready to work at the White House. Schlesinger in *A Thousand Days: John F. Ken-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nedy in the White House (1965) remembers replying, "I am not sure what I would be doing as Special Assistant, but, if you think I can help, I would like to come." Neither in word nor in thought, evidently, did he register the slightest regret at having to put aside his age-of-Roosevelt series, in which he had barely reached the end of FDR's first term in office.*

IN THE days following his acceptance of Kennedy's remarkably unspecific invitation, Schlesinger was reputed to have invested a fair amount of time trying to convince colleagues in the Harvard history department that active involvement in politics would deepen his understanding of the subject and make him a better historian. But if these reports were true, he was profoundly self-deceived. Far from becoming a better historian, he would never again, for the next twenty-six years, be able to think critically, and the field of 20th-century American political history would be further damaged as a result. The proposal that he join the New Frontier constituted a test of his will to stay the course as a historian—and he flunked it, even as the test posed by the Vietnam war would snap his vaunted "radical nerve" and cause him to quail before St. Augustine's certainty, as restated by Niebuhr, that "to the end of history, the peace of the world must be gained by strife."

Schlesinger's confession of confusion about his duties as Special Assistant was waved off by Kennedy. "Well, I am not sure what I will be doing as President either," he said, "but I am sure there will be enough at the White House to keep us both busy." A graceful joke surely, and Schlesinger retells it well. Nevertheless, his account of that gray afternoon on Irving Street reads strangely. For Kennedy to have been unclear in his mind about the role he expected Schlesinger to play in Washington would have been totally out of character for him, and Schlesinger could not have been so naive as not to realize that he was being tacitly asked to take copious notes on the Kennedy administration and eventually to write its history. In the 1980's Edmund Morris, literarily the most gifted of living biographers of American political leaders, would also be granted access to a sitting President so that he might portray him in print, but both sides would recognize the problem of protecting the biographer's intellectual independence; wherefore it was proposed and agreed that Morris would have regular contact with the Reagan White House, but would not be of it. That kind of ethical concern, however, had never been characteristic of Joseph P. Kennedy's way of doing business, and it did not affect his son's. The Kennedys coopted people, if necessary they bought them (to ghostwrite a book or whatever), and when the President-elect created a slot on his staff for the eager Schlesinger he thereby made him his creature—and his family's.

A Thousand Days—published a mere two years after Kennedy's death—runs to more than a thousand pages and is crammed with excerpts from documents, quotes of conversations, and intricately detailed recapitulations of events. As such, it is a valuable historical source. Unfortunately, the memoir also warrants comparison with Parson Weems's pamphlet biography of George Washington, the purpose of which, Weems explained to a publisher in 1800, was to bring out the President's "Great Virtues." Not from *A Thousand Days* can the reader learn about Kennedy's dalliances, during his assignment as a fledgling naval officer in 1941 and early 1942 to the Office of Naval Intelligence, with a married blonde of Danish birth who was suspected of being a German agent; or about his personal friendship with Senator Joe McCarthy; or about the rockiness of his marriage ("Like all marriages, this one may have had its early strains," says Schlesinger in dismissal of the subject); or even about the full extent of the disease he suffered from and the daily implantation of deoxycorticosterone acetate pellets in his thighs that it required before the arrival of cortisone in a form that could be taken orally.

Minimizing threats to Kennedy's luster and making pitiless cracks about his opponents, especially Nixon, became the unseemly devoirs of a once-honorable historian. But that was only the beginning of his degradation. As the assassination of the President proved to be but a prelude to his brother's, as situation-room confidence in counter-insurgency was eaten away by guilt about body counts, as the civil-rights movement led to black power, Keynesian full employment to runaway inflation, and the poverty program to social pathology, as the entire liberal dream took on the aspects of nightmare, Schlesinger surrendered to sheer fantasizing. The most egregious example was the 900 pages of treacle entitled *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (1978), which argued that in the role of tribune of the dispossessed young Kennedy came to haunt the American imagination and did so still, a decade after his death. Of how many imaginations besides those of Roosevelt Grier and Anthony Lewis could Schlesinger have been actually thinking?

WITH *The Cycles of American History*, the extent to which the historian has internalized his father's point of view becomes clearer than ever. In his central essay, "The Cycles of American Politics," the author sets forth a new version of what he refers to as "the Schlesinger formulation" of American politics. The emphasis now falls on 20th-century American history rather than the full run, and instead of

* In the fall of 1986, Schlesinger let it be known that he was finally going to write volume four, a consideration of American foreign policy in the 30's.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being broken down into sixteen-year tides it is presented in three cycles, each of thirty years' duration. The first two cycles follow the same pattern: each began with two stirring decades (1901-20 and 1933-52) of "public action, passion, idealism, and reform," and were succeeded by one deplorable decade (the 1920's and the 1950's) of "materialism, hedonism, and the overriding quest for personal gratification." (Yes, that's right. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. deplores personal gratification.) The third cycle, however, began with a foreshortened period of commitment to larger purposes, extending only from the advent of Kennedy to the early 1970's, after which the "compass needle . . . swung toward private interest and the fulfillment of self."

Beneath the streamlined chassis, the chrome fender guards, and the body stripes, "The Cycles of American Politics" is the same old Tin Lizzie in which the elder Schlesinger took American history for a ride. As before, a view of human nature that stops at the borders of the Republic is invoked as the force governing everything. "A nation's capacity for high-tension political commitment is limited. Nature insists on a respite. People can no longer gird themselves for heroic effort. They yearn to immerse themselves in the privacies of life." But thanks to the miracle of mass psychology, people eventually "grow bored with selfish motives and vistas, [they] weary of materialism as the ultimate goal. The vacation from public responsibility replenishes the national energies and recharges the national batteries. People . . . ask not what their country can do for them but what they can do for their country." Which is why Schlesinger can speak of the future with the same air of authority as his father. The national batteries will soon be recharged, he prophesies. "Shortly before or after the year 1990," Manichean America is going to get moving again.

But recent swings in American politics have been so erratic and so frequent as to make a mockery of the cycle concept. In a preemptive strike against this horrid idea, Schlesinger acknowledges the seeming anomaly that the Environmental Protection Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act became law on the dreadful Nixon's watch, and that Nixon even proposed a guaranteed minimum income in his Family Assistance Program, as well as indexing social-security benefits, imposing wage-and-price controls, and presiding over the fastest increase in social payments since the New Deal. Not to fret. Even though by the terms of the cycle theory an era of selfishness surely ought to have begun with Nixon's inauguration in 1969, the "liberal tide of the 60's [was] still running strong."

It may further seem anomalous, Schlesinger goes on to say, that a Democrat was elected President in 1976, smack in the middle of an otherwise Republican line-up. Not to fret. The four-year Carter Presidency did not represent an inexplicably brief recrudescence of the reign of the good guys, for Carter was "the most conservative Democratic President since Grover Cleveland." He was a throwback, this Georgian, and from "a longer perspective, the differences between Carter and Reagan will seem less consequential than the continuities." So much for the fact that, for all his skepticism about big-government solutions, Carter significantly extended liberalism's domestic agenda in a number of areas, such as education, energy, and urban development (the action-grant program), while in foreign policy it would be hard for anyone to deny that he was a liberal for almost three years, inasmuch as liberalism in this realm has been equated since Vietnam with the abnegation of national power. Moreover, the alleged throwback to Grover Cleveland was actually a portent of things to come, for the streaky combination of conservatism and liberalism for which Carter stood is evident nationwide in today's Democratic party, and may well provide oratorical themes for its presidential nominees in the era dead ahead that Nostradamus, Jr. likes to think will touch off a new cycle of his kind of politics.

"POWER is poison," Henry Adams darkly remarks in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918), but if those sobering words are quoted in the pages of *Cycles* it is only because the author wishes to quarrel with them. Which is ironic, because being close to the President of the United States in the early 1960's unquestionably poisoned the wells of Schlesinger's historical imagination. The stories of Blum, Freidel, and Leuchtenburg (and of the other members of their historical group) unfolded somewhat differently; nevertheless, a grim complementarity to the fate of Schlesinger obtained.

There may be other reasons—there almost surely are—why Blum's later career would be distinguished principally by his service on one of Harvard's governing boards rather than by scholarship; and why Freidel, after churning out three volumes on FDR, bing, bing, bing, in 1952, 1954, and 1956, should not have been able to come up with volume four, *Launching the New Deal*, until 1973 and has since fallen silent as Roosevelt's biographer; and why the intellectual promise of Leuchtenburg's *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal*, published in the final year of Camelot, remains unfulfilled. Yet at the same time that we must concede the likely presence in their lives of other coercive factors, it is difficult not to believe that as historians these three men—and many others like them in universities across the nation—were disabled by the political events of the 1960's and their reverberating sequels in the 1970's and 1980's. History, it would seem, betrayed a whole generation of specialists in 20th-century

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American political history because it smashed their working model of the American experience, as constructed by them out of the New Deal in their impressionable youth.

Although this generation is now passing from the academy, its successors for the most part remain wedded to the study of presidential elections as the only way to understand the political scene. There is, however, another way, as a good many political scientists, economists, and sociologists have discovered. While the electorate in the past forty years has switched allegiances time and again, the linear development of a leaderless, bureaucratic government has proceeded unbrokenly. In the middle and late 1940's, the consolidation of the administrative apparatus of the New Deal, the emergence of a national-security establishment, and the recruitment into federal service of experts from the natural sciences and the social sciences had the effect of placing much of the government beyond the control of elected officials.

Schlesinger, in *Cycles*, creates the impression that because the liberal Presidents of the postwar period, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, kept their White House staffs small and served as their own chiefs of staff, they were very much in charge of things. The quantum leap in size of the White House staff took place under Nixon and was the product, Schlesinger avers, of his paranoiac insecurity as President. These vaporings merely illustrate the pathos of Schlesinger's intellectual situation, as does his anti-Nixon, anti-Vietnam war diatribe, *The Imperial Presidency* (1973). In fact, the only postwar President who has come even close to asserting presidential control over the executive bureaucracy was Eisenhower, and that was because he governed through a general-staff system with which he, as a long-time Army officer, was eminently familiar. And if the White House staff was enlarged during Nixon's Presidency, it was because he, too, sought to bring the bureaucracy to heel.

Today, an elaborate staff exists in the houses of Congress as well as in the White House, and the modus operandi for the staffs of the vast federal agencies is to lobby their counterparts on the Hill, rather than the Congressmen themselves. Meanwhile, "iron triangles" linking executive bureaus, congressional committees, and interest-group clienteles protect their stakes in federal programs by frustrating the efforts of Presidents and their appointees to horn in on the policy-making action. Ramifying out beyond the Washington Beltway are the intermediary organizations —the consultants, the contractors, the city and state governments—through which the federal bureaucracy prefers to act so as to keep down its numerical strength (and thus silence protests about it), while at the same time expanding its political strength. And "issue networks," as the political scientist Hugh Heclo calls them, further politicize the nation at large by enabling such variegated people as the businessman with shady international contacts, the renowned economist sitting by the telephone in his book-lined study, and the citizens' group voicing its outrage at a planning-commission hearing to plug into the Washington power frame.

WE LIKE to think that when a new President comes into office he takes full command. Vertically and for brief periods, presidential authority has indeed been felt in the furthest reaches of the bureaucracy, most recently under the budget-cutting and deregulating Ronald Reagan. Horizontally and consistently, however, it has not.

In an age of bureaucracy, more historians ought to join the effort of their social-science colleagues to follow the connections between politics and administration. Many benefits might result from the rise of such a scholarship. It could serve to rejuvenate a badly ailing academic discipline. It might help to create a general appreciation of why so many of the episodes that have shaken the American Presidency in the past twenty-six years, from the decision to go forward with the Bay of Pigs invasion to the Watergate debacle to the Iranian arms scandal, have been bureaucratic dramas. On a considerably lower level of importance, it could also make even more apparent than is already the case that the prefabricated political responses of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. have very little bearing on the world that lies around him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beyond Abstract Art?

Roger Kimball

For many observers, Frank Stella has claim to be one of the two or three most important and original abstract artists to have emerged on the New York art scene in the fertile, tumultuous years of the early 60's. And among those who dissent from this estimation, few would deny that he has enjoyed one of the most impressive careers. At present, Stella belongs to that small circle of living artists—it numbers no more than a dozen—who have achieved unshakable international acclaim and who regularly command prices that are, well, stellar. But even at the beginning of his career, Stella's work elicited that blend of critical responses which, again and again, has proved an irresistible recipe for success: not unadulterated praise, but enthusiastic admiration from certain select dealers, critics, and curators, leavened with just enough hostility and misunderstanding from other quarters to make him desirably avant-garde and controversial.

It may not be out of place, then, to begin by observing that Stella's remarkable success has not been *solely* a matter of genius declaring itself. It is hardly immaterial, for example, that when Stella began painting, while still a secondary-school student at Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, he was befriended by his teacher, Patrick Morgan, and his wife, Maud Morgan, both of whom were painters with important connections in the New York art world; or that while he was a student at Princeton University, Stella's art teachers—including the painter and art historian William Seitz, the critic Robert Rosenblum, and the abstract painter Stephen Greene—took a keen interest in him and reportedly considered him Princeton's most brilliant art student; or indeed that one of Stella's best friends from the late 50's was Michael Fried, whose own considerable career as an art critic began with widely remarked essays that championed Stella and his brand of pared-down abstract painting.

I am not suggesting that such contingencies—or contingencies like his being married for several years to Barbara Rose, who became an influential critical voice in the 60's—"explain" Stella's success. Yet they are, I think, the sorts of things that can be said to smooth one's entry into the more advanced precincts of the New York art world. Stella's entry began soon after he graduated from Princeton, in 1958, and moved to New York. For a start, he was introduced to the prominent art dealer Leo Castelli, who straightaway offered to show his work. And because such expressions of interest tend to be contagious, it seems only natural that Dorothy Miller, Alfred H. Barr's chief assistant at the Museum of Modern Art, should also have wanted to exhibit the young artist's work. As it happened, Stella's *oeuvre* was at that time too small to furnish both exhibitions. He thus found himself faced with the enviable choice of beginning his career by participating in a group show at the Museum of Modern Art or having a one-man show at Castelli's gallery. After deliberation, he chose the former. But in the end Stella really had it both ways: he made his debut at Miller's "Sixteen Americans" exhibition in December 1959, with four of his so-called "black paintings" and, the next year, had the one-man show at Castelli's.

Stella's black paintings were a sensation. Several bear portentous titles like *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor*, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, and *Die Fahne Hoch*—the latter two echoing Nazi slogans—though Stella's less extravagant titles (*Delta*, for example) happen to describe the works a good deal more literally. Painted entirely in a dull black enamel, they are large, rectangular canvases displaying tidy chevrons, boxes, or other simple geometrical patterns formed by thin, slightly wavering lines of unpainted canvas. Appearing at a time when painting was still dominated by the explosive, gestural canvases of Abstract Expressionism, Stella's black paintings with their deliberate simplicity sounded a new note in painting and have been credited with heralding the rise of Minimalism.

Stella's work has been subject to dramatic shifts, which have taken him from the Minimalist paintings of the late 50's through the iridescent, irregularly-shaped canvases of the 60's, to the huge, brightly-colored aluminum and fiberglass three-dimensional constructions that have become his signature pieces in recent years. But however radical Stella's permutations, since 1970 or so he has

ROGER KIMBALL, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, has written on art and literature for the *New Criterion* and other periodicals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come to occupy a secure place in the mainstream of established taste. The ultimate ratification of this position came a few years ago when Stella was invited to give the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University for the academic year 1983-84. Previous incumbents of the Norton chair include T.S. Eliot, whose Norton lectures became *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, Igor Stravinsky (*The Poetics of Music*), Lionel Trilling (*Sincerity and Authenticity*), Northrop Frye (*The Secular Scripture*), and many others of similar repute. Stella, born in 1936, is the youngest Norton professor appointed to date. He is also only the second painter—his predecessor being Ben Shahn, whose lectures were *The Shape of Content*—and the first abstract painter to be so honored.

The recent publication of Stella's Norton lectures, *Working Space*,* is thus an event of considerable interest, not only because of his standing in the art world but also because he has repeatedly distinguished himself as one of the most thoughtful and articulate artists of his generation. Among other things, Stella has always been very good at explaining what he is up to in his painting, even—indeed, especially—when insisting that he is up to nothing beyond the mere application of paint to canvas. Until now, though, his reflections on art have been mostly confined to interviews, brief statements prepared to accompany a show, and the like; the Norton lectures afforded him an opportunity to set forth his personal artistic credo more systematically and to reflect critically on the situation of contemporary painting.

Near the end of *Working Space*, Stella describes the book as "my insistent defense of abstraction"; certainly, the fate of abstraction in late 20th-century painting is a guiding concern throughout the book. But whether these sundry reflections on the evolution and future of abstract painting really add up to anything like a *defense* of abstraction—whether, in fact, they remain true to the spirit of modernist abstract painting at all—is a more difficult, elusive, and, finally, a more troubling question.

STELLA begins by sounding an alarm: contemporary American painting, especially abstract painting, is in crisis. It no longer exhibits the freshness, the vitality, the sense of risk and exploration that it did as recently as the late 60's. Its gestures, no matter how extravagant, seem tired and conventional. More and more, contemporary abstract painting impresses us as shallow, arbitrary, in some deep sense artistically beside the point. Not, Stella hastens to add, that recent efforts at representational painting—he is thinking foremost of neo-Expressionism—have fared better than abstraction. "Realist painting today," he complains, "is built on a retrograde base of Surrealist illusionism."

A chief cause of the malaise, Stella tells us, is that abstract painting has fallen out of touch with its past. It has great difficulty imagining a pertinent history for itself that extends back much beyond Mondrian and Kandinsky; the genius of past painting—the genius of Michelangelo, for example, or Titian or Caravaggio—exists merely as a kind of art-historical fact, no longer as a challenging inspiration. In part, of course, this failure to inhabit the past follows from abstract painting's deliberately polemical relation to the canons of traditional representational painting. But for Stella, the problem is that by cutting itself off from the past, abstract painting has also in effect edited itself out of the future; lacking a living tradition to draw upon, it now finds itself also lacking a credible future.

Thus the principal task that Stella sets himself in *Working Space* is to extend and reinvigorate the history of abstract painting so that it, in turn, will be available to nourish future artistic aspiration. To this end, the book attempts to trace the development of a coherent set of pictorial concerns from Caravaggio through the work of such modernist painters as Picasso, Malevich, and Kandinsky, concluding with the recent efforts of Abstract Expressionism, Colorfield painting, and the kind of abstract construction that Stella himself has been working with since the 1970's.

Now, the painting of Caravaggio and other early 17th-century masters may seem an odd point of departure; notwithstanding the call to recover a lost dimension of pictorial history, one might well ask why we should look to such staunchly realistic painters to refresh the desiccated abstract painting of the late 20th century. But it is one of Stella's most daring contentions that the present crisis in abstract painting parallels the crisis that followed the death of Titian at the end of the 16th century. In Stella's view, the 17th-century solution to *its* crisis is directly relevant to the concerns of contemporary abstract painting. "Something emerges from the churches in Rome," he writes, "that speaks directly to the genius of the great painting of the 17th century and at the same time to the struggles of 20th-century abstraction."

For Stella, the versatile genius who provides a solution to both artistic crises is Caravaggio—who, indeed, emerges as the presiding hero of these pages. Stella's first two chapters are explicitly devoted to his work, and the remaining four chapters repeatedly return to savor his genius. According to Stella, not only did Caravaggio create "the kind of pictoriality we take for granted when we call a painting great, a kind of pictoriality that had not existed before," but he also "changed the way artists would have to think about themselves and their work; he made the studio into a place of magic and mystery, a cathedral of the self."

In Caravaggio's "confrontational, projective illu-

* Harvard University Press, 177 pp., $30.00 (cloth), $14.95 (paper).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sionism," Stella discovers above all the birth of the kind of bold spatial manipulation, the kind of "working space," that he misses in contemporary painting. Such "working space" is less a passive field upon or within which the artist works than an active, enveloping, seemingly *transitive* medium: a space that itself may be said to "work" by appearing to violate the boundary between real and pictorial space. In *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (1600-01), for example, we see the stunned Paul fallen backward off his horse, his arms upraised, and Caravaggio's ingenious lighting and foreshortening make both the God-struck Paul and the horse's right front hoof seem to spill palpably out of the canvas into the viewer's space.

It is in this sense that for Stella great painting does not merely *illustrate* space, populating a neutral picture plane with shapes or figures, but must seem to *create* space, to create "the sensation of real space." "Fanciful as this space may be," he tells us, "it has the cast of reality"; it imparts "the sensation of real presence and real action." Herein lies the origin of what Stella describes as "the Godlike nature of creation in painting." And so expert is Caravaggio at creating space with this "special, self-contained character" that Stella extols his achievement as a "miracle."

Precisely this "miracle" of "created space" is what Stella finds missing from contemporary abstract painting, which, especially since the late 60's, has displayed "surface coherence at the expense of pictorial energy." In effect, then, Stella calls for a new Caravaggio, for a painter whose self-conscious pictorial drama will revive painting's tie to the past and breathe new life into contemporary abstraction; and though this worthy successor to Caravaggio is never explicitly named, one is somehow not surprised that Stella's list of desiderata makes the author of *Working Space* the only serious contender for his mantle.

STELLA's sometimes extravagant way of putting the matter may obscure the extent to which his interpretation of Caravaggio remains quite traditional. For example, in his classic *Caravaggio Studies* (1955), Walter Friedlaender, too, emphasizes the prominence of "forms projecting toward the spectator" in Caravaggio's mature painting. Indeed, Friedlaender's description of the effect of Caravaggio's handling of space is remarkably akin to Stella's, even down to the diction. "We no longer look into a fictitious world set apart by design, color, and light," Friedlaender writes, "the entire construction seems to come physically toward us as if entering step by step into our world. We are made the recipients of the miracle."

Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference between Friedlaender's and Stella's interpretation of the Lombardian master. Both stress the projective spatial illusion that stands at the center of Caravaggio's achievements. But for Friedlaender, the beguiling illusionism that Caravaggio practices upon the beholder is undercut by a reality outside the picture plane, the autonomy of the artist's space is broken by an acknowledgment of a dimension beyond art; Stella, by contrast, underscores the autonomy of Caravaggio's art, the "special, self-contained character" of his pictorial space. Friedlaender's Caravaggio remains an essentially religious artist, in the service of a reality that transcends painting and that "keeps the worshipper in a state of humble awe"; Stella's Caravaggio is the artist who "made the studio . . . into a cathedral of the self."

The difference says a great deal about the underlying nature of Stella's own artistic program, at the heart of which lies the contention that great painting seeks to create a space that is not so much an imitation as a rival of reality. By creating the illusion of autonomous, self-contained space, the artist is able to communicate a sense of reality convincing enough to defeat, if but fleetingly, the contingency and transience that saturate everyday experience. Though admittedly elusive and "hard to see"—admittedly even unrealizable in practice—the promise of real presence that pictorial illusion conjures is, according to Stella, at the center of our attraction to great painting. It is in this sense that he can suggest the artist is "blessed." "Here we feel the true liberation provided by art," Stella writes. "We can sense being something, someone, other than ourselves."

Setting forth this notion of an autonomous "working space" is the main "theoretical" or conceptual point of Stella's Norton lectures. But what he presents is less a systematic treatise than an art-historical sampler, a series of more or less related, more or less personal, reflections on his pantheon of artistic icons by means of which the notion of working space is elaborated. And in this sense, considered as a kind of elevated table-talk, *Working Space* is a trove of casually brilliant remarks about painting and various painters. For such a short book there is a good deal of "filler," but it tends to be filler of rare quality.

Many of the passages Stella devotes to Caravaggio, for example, or to Annibale Carracci, or to some contemporary American painters are the product of a restlessly sensitive aesthetic intelligence; and his main conceit, inviting us to compare the situation of contemporary abstract painting with the situation of late 16th-century Rome, is as illuminating as, finally, it is perverse. His Caravaggio may in fact conform only imperfectly to the historical personage of that name; but as a metaphor for a certain species of spiritual artistic yearning, Stella's Caravaggio dramatically crystallizes a whole range of contemporary artistic problems.

UNFORTUNATELY, though, *Working Space* is also full of much that is questionable, misleading, or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even patently false. Many of Stella's pronouncements are little more than chic verbal gestures, ill-equipped to bear close scrutiny. This category includes throwaway *obiter dicta* as well as more fully developed discussions of particular painters. To the former belongs Stella's observation, made in the course of his comments on Rodin's "flowing, erotic marble limbs," that "It is very hard for abstraction, or abstract figuration, to be sexy, and if it's not sexy, it's not art." But in what sense *can* abstraction ever be said to be sexy? It is difficult even to make the idea intelligible, to say nothing of granting assent. And the more general suggestion, that "if it's not sexy, it's not art," is simply an instance of a critical reflex that has become practically *de rigueur* in fashionable writing about art and literature these days: the reflex that automatically endows everything with a patina of eros, hoping thereby to invest it with added piquancy and allure.

This taste for the extravagant or titillating cliché is equally evident in some of Stella's more elaborated digressions. One of his more tedious gambits—tedious because so predictable—is to suggest that the art works he discusses are at bottom self-referential, that they have more to do with the grammar of artistic production than with their ostensible subject matter. Discussing Titian's excruciatingly powerful painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* (c. 1570-76), for example, Stella assures us that the painting

> is more accurate about showing the personal costs inherent in the mechanics of painting than it is profound about describing the human condition in 16th-century Italy. By stripping away a surface created by the artist's gifted touch, Titian reveals the blood-filled sinew and bone of pictorial technique, showing us how difficult it is for the artist to nurture and manipulate the body of his creation without mutilating it.

Titian's shockingly graphic depiction of the torment of Marsyas, heavy with the themes of hubris and divine retribution, is thus dissolved into a metaphor for the painter's activity of painting.

Stella's interpretation of Titian also illustrates his tendency to confuse us with untenable dichotomies and comparisons. Thus, do the alternatives in a consideration of *The Flaying of Marsyas* really lie between "the personal costs inherent in the mechanics of painting" and a description of "the human condition in 16th-century Italy"? Or consider his observation that "Today, running around and dripping paint on bare canvas does not carry with it a sense of aesthetic excitement, does not create enough of a pictorial sensation or illusion." One might well agree with the first part of this statement, that "running around dripping paint on bare canvas" is not the artistically engaging pastime it is said to have once been; but it is far from clear that the "aesthetic excitement" in question was ever necessarily a matter of pictorial "illusion." In fact, as happens again and again in *Working Space*, Stella has here grafted his obsession with pictorial illusion onto an artistic movement whose chief concern with illusion was how to dispense with it.

Perhaps Stella's most memorable excursion along these lines is his discussion, in the last chapter of the book, of Paulus Potter's 1667 painting, *The Young Bull*. The painting is an aggressively naturalistic depiction of a bull, a cow, a few sheep, and a cowherd, grouped *en famille* as it were around a romantically gnarled tree. Stella slyly suggests that "The attraction of Potter's bull is the attraction of innocence." That is fair enough, as far as it goes, though most viewers would want to add that the "innocence" of Potter's painting is essentially the mock-innocence of kitsch.

In any case, Stella's primary reason for introducing the Dutch painting is to claim that it "has served as a model, as a kind of inspiration, for the development of abstract painting," including, he tells us, some of his own paintings: "One always loves paintings that are like one's own. In this case Potter's *Young Bull* is a faithful image of a painting of mine from 1975, *Leblon II*." For the benefit of the skeptical, *Leblon II* is reproduced in the book; it is a polychrome, irregularly-shaped, abstract construction—"mixed media on honeycombed aluminum"—of 80-by-116 inches. But not even Stella's ingenious commentary can convince us that *Leblon II* has anything in common with *The Young Bull*, let alone that the 17th-century nature study has served as anything like a "model" for the development of abstract painting.

Indeed, Stella's discussion of *The Young Bull* cannot but strike us a kind of mad divertissement, a divertissement that reaches giddy, surrealistic heights when Stella suggests that the "sense of disjointed, awkward pictorial space surrounding the markings and figures" in *The Young Bull* ties it "to the animation of Lascaux" on the one hand and "the graffiti of New York" on the other. It is hard to know which is more absurd here, the suggestion that the primitive cave paintings of Lascaux have anything at all to do, pictorially or spiritually, with contemporary urban graffiti, or that either is meaningfully related to Potter's bucolic sentimentalism.

CONSIDERED individually, such objections are perhaps not particularly telling; none really demonstrates more than that Stella's approach to art history is at least as "creative" as his approach to his own painting. But taken together, and considered with Stella's identification of spatial illusion as the central imperative of contemporary abstract painting, they suggest a sensibility thoroughly committed to an aestheticized view of art. For in essence, *Working Space* is a brief for a certain species of pictorial illusionism; and Caravaggio comes in for such extravagant praise precisely because Stella considers him "a totally successful illusionist."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That Frank Stella should be the author of such a brief is extraordinary. For one thing, it would appear to represent a radical departure from his own earlier convictions about the vocation of painting. In a much-quoted 1964 interview, Stella complained that he was always getting

> into arguments with people who want to retain the old values in painting—the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas. My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen *is* there. It really is an object. . . . If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it. . . . What you see is what you see.

"Only what can be seen *is* there": in other words, at this time Stella was adamantly against illusionism in painting, adamantly against what his early champion Michael Fried once castigated as "theatricality." *Working Space* represents a more or less complete reversal of that early position.

Stella's embrace of pictorial illusionism not only sets him against his own earlier artistic project, it also sets him at odds with the dominant tendency in modernist abstract painting in this century. "The aim of art," Stella insists near the beginning of *Working Space*, "is to create space—space that is not compromised by decoration or illustration. . . . This is what painting has always been about." There is a great deal that could be said about this passage. As Stella himself is quick to acknowledge, it leaves out of account practically all art before the Renaissance, before the development of the kind of sophisticated spatial illusionism that the perfection of one-point perspective made possible; indeed, Stella claims that art before the Renaissance "remains qualified in our eyes" precisely because of its "undeveloped illusionism."

But the "undeveloped illusionism" that Stella disparages need not be regarded as a liability. For example, in *Art and Scholasticism* (1962), the French philosopher and aesthetician Jacques Maritain tells us that:

> When on visiting an art gallery one passes from the rooms of the primitives to those in which the glories of oil painting and of a much more considerable material science are displayed, the foot takes a step on the floor but the soul takes a steep fall. It had been taking the air on the everlasting hills: it now finds itself on the floor of a theater—a magnificent theater. With the 16th century the lie installed itself in painting, which began to love science for its own sake, endeavoring to give the *illusion* of nature and to make us believe that in the presence of a painting we are in the presence of the scene or the subject painted, not in the presence of a painting.

For Maritain, the development of the kind of spatial illusionism that Stella champions, though it marks a perfection of artistic technique for its own sake, also signals the beginning of painting's spiritual decline.

Maritain's vignette epitomizes one traditional modernist response to the question of pictorial illusion in painting. Its essential aesthetic point is formulated in a more secular context by the critic Clement Greenberg, who may be considered the great, albeit unnamed, antagonist of *Working Space*. In his influential essay "Modernist Painting" (1960), Greenberg identifies the rejection of illusion as a main feature of modernist art. "Realistic, illusionist art had dissembled the medium," Greenberg observes,

> using art to conceal art. Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting—the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment—were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Modernist painting has come to regard these same limitations as positive factors that are to be acknowledged openly.

Greenberg wishes to salvage the independence of painting every bit as much as Stella does; and his emphasis on the formal and material qualities of art helped inaugurate an approach to painting that Stella's own criticism continues to follow in many respects. (See, for example, Stella on Titian's *The Flaying of Marsyas*.) But unlike Stella, Greenberg holds that trafficking in pictorial illusion serves to bind modern painting to an aspect of its heritage that has become aesthetically bankrupt.* Before the ascendancy of modernism, Greenberg notes, it "looked as though [the arts] were going to be assimilated to entertainment pure and simple, and entertainment itself looked as though it were going to be assimilated, like religion, to therapy." In his view, it is only by preserving a critical, self-questioning, attitude toward its own vocation that painting—indeed, that modernist art generally—can avoid being reduced to an elevated kind of entertainment or "therapy."

* Greenberg's rejection of illusion, and his famous insistence on "flatness" or two-dimensionality in painting, is worth reconsidering in the context of Stella's own recent work. "Three-dimensionality is the province of sculpture," Greenberg notes, "and for the sake of its own autonomy painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture." Essentially the same point was made by the German writer Wilhelm Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908)—a charter document in the literature on abstraction—when he observed that abstraction by nature requires the "strict suppression of the representation of space." Stella has repeatedly insisted that the effect of his latest three-dimensional constructions is fundamentally "pictorial," not sculptural; but it is a nice question whether we experience these sprawling, multicolored armatures and cutout projections as painting or whether they are not really a kind of relief sculpture.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AT THE deepest level the question that *Working Space* poses is whether Stella's vision of "creating space" does not turn its back on the fundamentally critical nature of the entire modernist enterprise. As Greenberg notes, modernist painting does not reject recognizable objects as such, but "the kind of space that recognizable, three-dimensional objects can inhabit" —exactly the kind of "working space" that Stella advocates. Brooding about "the relationship of abstraction to the meaning and future of modernism," Stella acknowledges that "Modernism is the painting of the 20th century, and abstraction forms the core of its pictorial growth and strength"; as we have seen, he even describes *Working Space* as his "insistent defense of abstraction." In fact, though, the abstraction that Stella has in mind is a kind of renegade abstraction, an abstraction *manqué*. For what Stella advocates is using the *gestures* of abstract painting to weave illusionistic, essentially figurative, fantasies. In the end, Stella wants to have it both ways: he wants the *effect* of reality without having to bother with the commitment to the truth-beyond-painting that allegiance to reality demands.

As many of the passages quoted in this article suggest, *Working Space* often exhibits a fervent, even religious, rhetoric that Stella uses to characterize the aesthetic power he attributes to illusionistic pictoriality. Yet it is difficult to know how one is to understand such rhetoric, for the truth is that an element of irony is seldom absent from Stella's presentation in *Working Space*. There are few pronouncements about the nature or vocation of painting that he does not hollow out or cast doubt upon. One effect of this ubiquitous undercurrent of irony is to grant his argument an almost impermeable air of sophistication and complexity; but at bottom the irony also masks a confusion about the aesthetic substance of painting.

Near the end of the book, discussing Kandinsky's occult speculations about the nature of art, Stella pauses to ask, "Is theosophy making abstraction trivial, or is the spiritual impulse being caricatured by abstraction"? Given Kandinsky's infatuation with spiritualism, this is certainly a legitimate question. But one would like to apply it to Stella's own meditations on the "miracle" of Caravaggio's art, the "Godlike nature" of artistic creation, and so on. The alternatives Stella offers Kandinsky—trivializing abstraction or caricaturing the spiritual impulse—may well be the alternatives facing his own presentation in *Working Space*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Young People

A Story

Allegra Goodman

THE Checker cab cuts in front of a tour bus and screeches to a stop at the St. Moritz. "Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, please," Henry Markowitz tells the tiny Yemeni cab driver.

"You got it," she says without turning around. The cab lurches forward, narrowly missing a doorman loaded with suitcases. "Watch it!" the cabbie screams out the window.

"Dear God," Henry breathes. He swabs his fleshy face with a white handkerchief. "I had forgotten what the traffic was like."

"You used to live here?"

"I was a student at NYU."

"Ah," she leans forward and shoots her cab into the next lane. The cab license identifies her as Tiki Sofer. Her little face is shadowed by a pouf of grizzled gray hair. Tiki's quickness makes Henry nervous. He feels huge and swollen in the heat. Suit coat crushed over his bent legs, he holds the tulips for his mother cradled in one arm and leans his other on the ledge of the open car window drumming his fingers on the door.

"I was an NYU student as well," Tiki continues, "and now I am a poet. I write poetry in Hebrew and English. And I run this cab with my husband. I was an anthropology major. But the professors were such shits I'm driving a cab. If you don't sleep with them, or do their work for them, or both, you're going to get some kind of shitty recommendation guaranteed to keep you out of the department."

"You don't have to tell me, I know," Henry sympathizes. "Let me tell you, I've been denied tenure at some very fancy institutions. They did everything they could to keep me out. Finally I said, the hell with them. I got my degree at Harvard Business School and since then I've been living like a human being."

"Yeah," Tiki breaks in impatiently, "but the point is they couldn't keep me out of the field. I'm publishing oral histories of Yemeni women, and I've branched out into linguistics and poetry. Then there's the cab and I've got three children. So I'm pretty threatening on a lot of different fronts. There was a time when I was interviewing for every academic job. But now they've got to read me in the journals. I've had some real findings, too. Did you know that nearly all traditional Yemeni women were raped on their wedding night?"

"No, I didn't," Henry confesses.

"Only one woman I interviewed wasn't raped, and she'd run away. You really have to understand the Yemeni tradition to understand that. I was fortunate to live in three cultures as a child: my parents' traditional home, the Orthodox *shul*, and Israel. But my kids are really lucky. They're growing up in at least five cultures: the Yemeni at their grandmother's, the Orthodox *shtiebel* on the corner, Israel every summer, my friends from the Institute of Social Analysis and Greenwich Village, and our black neighborhood. That combination is just about unbeatable. Their father, by the way, is a real person—none of that academic crap. He runs the cab twelve hours, and I run the cab twelve hours. But don't think we deprive ourselves. There are some things in life that are important and we make time for them. Since I've started with the cab I've written a play and almost been assaulted twice. But I handled it. You learn about networking: one friend did the costumes and a painter friend did the sets. We got grants from the park, the rec center, and the Borough Council on Culture and the Arts and put it together with traditional Middle Eastern dancing and instruments. The whole thing was a huge life-cycle pageant of traditional village life. Another friend did the food. Another one reviewed it. Once you have the network going you expand. We're going to do something big in Central Park next summer. So that's the way it is. I'm an artist. And I live in the real world."

Henry stops drumming on the car door. "I hope you won't be offended if I compliment you on your courage," he says. His right eye twitches earnestly. "You see, I have great admiration for artists and art in general. I feel there is such a tremendous need in the world to support beauty. There is so much cruelty, such inarticulate violence in the world." He gestures toward the litter-lined street. "I would like to do everything in my power to help you—the artists, the creators. In fact, if I can find my card—" He reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pastel Laura Ashley business card. "No, that's not it." He rummages

ALLEGRA GOODMAN is a second-year student at Harvard. Her first published story, "Variant Text," appeared in our June 1986 issue, and her second, "Wish List," appeared in December 1986.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some more. "Here we are." The card is printed: *Henry Markowitz, Publisher, Equinox Press, 217A High St., Oxford, England.* "You must be a little startled at this," he apologizes.

"Not at all," Tiki smiles. She pockets the card and gives Henry one of her own.

"LOOK, taxi-lady," mutters the driver of the tour bus. He tries it several ways—once with a chilling calm, once with a sliding sneer on the word *lady*.

The bus inches forward in the morning traffic.

"Can you get there on time?" asks Ms. Froelich, the head foundation rep.

"No," the driver answers precisely. He glances at his passengers in the rear-view mirror. The kids don't look worried. Just sprawling across the chairs into the aisles. Stretching their legs longer —all bone and muscle. The girls, just bones.

"The rehearsals are going to run late," worries Ms. Froelich behind him.

"If you can figure out a way to get crosstown faster . . ." the driver starts. How old could this "adviser" be? Twenty-one? Just old enough to hold a clipboard, and they put her in charge of thirty huge teen-agers. Dancers, yet. *Encouraged* not to sit still.

"Wait, stop the bus!" Ms. Froelich clatters her clipboard and points to a kid out on the street running toward the bus.

The airbrakes shriek, setting off all the car horns. The driver opens the pleated door, swinging the arm handle for the kid dodging traffic.

Sean's duffel bag slips off his shoulder as he dives for the door. His tap and clogging shoes have sunk to the bottom, and the steel-braced Irish dancing shoes jab his hip.

"You're Sean McColl," Ms. Froelich tells him, and sticks a name tag on his sweater. The bus jolts forward, and Sean sinks into the seat next to Brian Wattley / Chicago IL / ballet. Brian is slim and black and wears a white muffler.

"What happened to you?" he asks Sean.

"We drove down from Framingham and my Mom forgot her camera so we were going to go back for it, but then we thought—when we get to Grandma's, why don't we take hers? But she was out of film. . . ."

"You can't take pictures at Lincoln Center," Brian announces.

"Yes, you can," the girl across the aisle breaks in. "You get that film you don't need flashes for."

"That's the kind she was out of. I mean my grandmother . . . ," Sean's story trails off. Cara Novak / Concord NH / ballet. Her hair is long and smooth over her thin shoulders. Sean wonders whether the fuzzy stuff on Cara's sweater will come off with the name tag. He wants to peel it off and see. He says instead, "I love your shoes. They're so—blue."

Cara looks down at her turquoise sneakers. She points her toes out into the aisle. "Yeah, aren't they cool? I got them at Woolworth's."

"Are all your shoes like this?" asks Sean.

"Why?"

"It's one of the first things I notice."

"Do you have a thing about feet?" she asks mildly.

"No. I just like looking at them."

Brian leans back in his seat and lights a cigarette. He smiles at Sean's freckled astonishment. "I amaze you, don't I?"

"Well, no," Sean says, "but doesn't it do terrible things to your breathing and all that?"

Cara fans away the smoke with her rehearsal schedule. Then she kneels on her chair and tries to open the window.

Sean lurches across the aisle to help, but the window snaps open and Cara leans out.

"Head and limbs inside the bus," booms the driver.

"I can't believe I'm here," Cara tells Sean. "I mean, Dad tried to make the audition tape on this thing that wasn't even a video machine. This old movie camera. I looked like Charlie Chaplin."

"What do you mean, old movie camera?" Brian laughs. "Better than nothing. My teacher couldn't even find anything till two days before all the stuff had to be in. She went to all these clubs, I mean like every animal: Elks, Lions, Mooses, finally she got the camera from the Kiwanis. And my sister works for Video Hut so she got the film. Pain in the ass for three-point-five minutes."

"I *know*," Cara flops back in her chair. "Dad screamed at me the whole time. It would be *so* funny if the tapes had sound. Then you could hear all the parents in the background."

"My tape had sound," Sean puts in.

Brian takes a long drag and stares. "Shit."

"It's just because I do step dancing," Sean says anxiously. They have to hear the clicks. But I got screamed at, too. When I went in to the studio they called me a green cat."

Brian only raises his eyebrows, but Cara asks, "You went to a *studio*? What are you, rich or something?"

"No!" Sean splutters. "My grandparents paid."

"Wow!" Cara laughs. "Mine are so totally cheap. For Mom's birthday, Grandma sent this little card, and inside she taped a ten-dollar bill. Then on the card she wrote 'SPLURGE!' I can't wait to see what she'll get me for graduation. When do you graduate?" she asks Brian.

"I don't," he yawns. "I'm a professional."

"Really? They're making me apply to college. Dad is heavy into education. He made us all go back with him to his Harvard reunion. He just like stood in his old dorm room and cried for fifteen minutes. Then it turned out it wasn't even his room. But anyway he keeps telling me and my brother like if you don't do the whole college experience you're less human."

Brian stubs out his cigarette. "Dance now; human-shit later. Hey, let's have some fuckin' music! Isn't that a radio up there?" Brian vaults up the aisle, pushing off from the chair backs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Look, young man," the driver hollers, "This is my bus, and it's my radio. I'm going to play my music. And I don't care who you are, or where you dance, there's going to be no profanity on this bus. You stand in back of that red line."

CLUTCHING Tiki Sofer's card and the orange-red tulips, Henry takes the groaning elevator up to the hospital room. In the bed by the door a young black woman with hennaed hair lies stiffly in a body cast. She whispers and giggles into the telephone receiver. Henry's mother dozes in the next bed. Gray hair is swept back from her sharp forehead. She has kept her Tuesday hair appointment even in the hospital. Henry bends down and kisses her cheek.

"Hello, Henry," she says, without moving.

"I brought you flowers. Would you like them by the window? How are you feeling now?" Henry puts the flowers down and draws a chair to the bed.

"I had a terrible night. Racking pains."

"Come, Mother, it couldn't have been that bad. Does it hurt in your eye?"

"I can't see."

"You have to give it time."

"Oh, it's not a question of time," Mrs. Markowitz laughs sarcastically. "He did the wrong eye."

"He did not do the wrong eye, Mother, we've been through this before."

"Henry, let me be the judge of my own eyes. I know which eye had the cataract."

Henry sighs and tries another tack. "Well, you're going home tomorrow; you must be looking forward to that."

"Four walls. Four walls and some furniture."

"What's this you've been reading?"

"There on the night table? The new Howatch book. It's my only diversion. I can't see the television."

"Then how do you read this?" Henry picks up the thick paperback gingerly. The cover is blue, embossed with silver lettering: "She Is Young and Desperate—Ready to Gamble Everything for Love in—*RUSSIAN ROULETTE*." "You can't really be reading this. This is filth, pornography at best!"

"It's not as good as *Penmarric*, but it's all I have. I can only read a few pages a day." Mrs. Markowitz's eyes begin to water. "Put it down. And stop destroying everything dear to me. You don't understand the kind of pain I'm in."

"What kind of pain could you have? It was a tiny operation. Dr. Gold told me it went beautifully."

"That man doesn't know or care. He looks at me and sees the new car he's going to buy. He doesn't see my pain, and he won't prescribe me more pills."

"Mother, you've got enough pills. You don't need pills. Look at the girl in the next bed. She had a real operation. Is she complaining about pain?"

"Some people don't have pain."

They stare at each other, baffled. "Guess where I'm having dinner tonight?" Henry tries to restart the conversation. "Do you remember Jemmy? He's vice-president of Eastern Trust now. He's taking me to some fund-raising thing for young dancers."

"How kind of you to fit me in."

Henry stands up and walks around the bed impatiently. "You know I came all the way from England to see you. But if you insist on making this visit painful, and turn it into an empty gesture, I refuse to argue with you. I can only say that it hurts me deeply that you are never satisfied with, or for that matter the least bit interested in, my life. And I must ask what I could possibly do to earn your approval."

Mrs. Markowitz looks deliberately at her balding, overweight, thick-featured son. "Get married," she says clearly.

SEAN slouches down in his seat and leans his head back. The empty concert hall looks like a planetarium with its black floating ceiling. The tiered lights of the balcony railings stand distant as constellations.

"My mother has this thing," says Cara. "She has this thing about summer jobs. But not dancing. I mean, other people did *Nutcracker* at Saratoga and I worked on this blueberry farm. I had to dance in the *barn*. And then I worked at a dessert place in Maine. It was supposed to make me eat. I cut up peaches and I made this thing: gingerbread, then vanilla ice cream, then gingerbread, then ice cream, then peaches. And last summer I worked in a candy store. That really turned me off food."

A modern dancer runs through her dance on the bare stage. She takes a little hop, representing the leap she will make in tonight's performance. Then she hurries through the rest of her dance in tiny steps as if she were humming to herself a remembered tune.

"You know what I used to like," says Sean in the audience. "That rubber candy."

"Gummy bears. They've got gummy rats now. They're like a foot long with these huge tails and they're black, white, or pink."

They applaud loudly for the dancer when she finishes her run-through.

"Look at her tights!" Cara points to the dancer's bronze metallic legs.

"She looks like a Haliburton Zero suitcase," says Sean.

Ms. Froelich hears them laughing and walks toward them. "There's Brian," Cara whispers. Her arm brushes Sean's on the armrest between them. He wonders whether he should move his arm away. "Look," she whispers.

The stage darkens and Brian centers himself kneeling. He balances on his knees, arching his back. He thrusts one arm above his head, and stretches one arm behind him, fingers braced

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against the floor. The technicians are having trouble with Brian's tape. Brian holds still, clenching his teeth. The cords of his neck stand out. Suddenly the stage lights up with the sprightly music of *Coppélia*. Brian walks to the edge of the stage and shades his eyes, peering out into the cavernous hall. "That's not my music," he tells the stage manager, who follows the script from a lighted music stand.

"We understand that, Brian."

"And I don't want the lights to come up that fast. I want it gradual."

The sweating manager walks down the aisle to the stage. "Cool it, kid."

Brian stands in a side drape with one hand on his hip. All the house lights blink into darkness.

"All right. Pumpkin time," announces an adviser. "Everybody into the musicians' lounge."

Sean gets up reluctantly. "What happened?"

"It's the union," Cara says wisely. "The stagehands have been working four hours without a break. So that's it; they stop."

They follow the other dancers backstage. In the lounge, tables are laid out with tuna-salad sandwiches, potato chips, fudge brownies, and sticky tarts. "Just relax," Ms. Froelich tells the sullen group.

"Oh, right," Brian says. "When all the dancers after intermission haven't rehearsed. What are we supposed to do? Slow down so they can follow us with the spotlight?"

"I hope I don't get Brian's music." Cara bites into a sandwich and continues with her mouth full. "My whole town'd freak out. They all drove down from Concord in the school bus—I mean my sister's coming with her whole softball team."

HENRY rings the bell of the restored Brooklyn brownstone. There is no answer. Six-thirty, Jemmy had said, because they had to go to the young dancers. He backs away from the door and checks the address nervously. All the houses on the street look the same, and they have little signs on the grass informing intruders and visitors of protection by Castle Services.

The door cracks open so fast that Henry and his bottle of Glenfiddich nearly topple off the brick steps into the hybrid holly bushes. A stern dark-browed kid stares wordlessly at him.

"Philip? Good lord, you're getting big. I always used to hate it when people said that to me, but you make me feel ancient. Do you remember me?"

"I'll get my father, Mr. Markowitz." Philip takes the scotch and leads Henry into the house. They walk past the nearly vertical flight of stairs facing the door and enter the white living room with its parquet floor, Boston ferns, old Scandesign chairs, and new Steinway piano. The room is immaculate except that the carpet is littered with empty cassette wrappers, extension cords, microphone heads, and pages of home video camera instructions. Jemmy kneels on the floor filming with his back toward Henry. The rest of the family crowds around helping.

"All right, you should see a green light." Jemmy's wife Angela is a broad-hipped woman with a pageboy haircut. She wears a dress of black silk that looks like Qiana. "Do you or don't you see a green light?"

"I don't know!" Jemmy protests.

"What do you mean you don't know? Honestly, Jemmy, you're mechanically inept."

"Let me see, D-d-daddy." Fourteen-year-old Nicole kneels down next to Jemmy and wrests the camera from her father. She wears Guess? jeans and doesn't stutter as much as she used to. "No, he's right, Mommy. You're not sup-pup-pup-posed to see the light. You just push it here."

"Nicole, give him back the camera," Angela orders. "Your job is to keep Josh out of the reflectors." Josh, the fat baby of the family, is rolling his walker steadily toward the shiny silver umbrella reflectors near the piano.

At the center of all this stands three-year-old Sara. With her white smocked dress, curly brown hair, and blue eyes, she waits patiently for the camera to roll.

"The test light is off," Jemmy tells Angela.

"Finally. Nicole, check the microphone. Just tap it. That's enough. All right, we're ready."

"Jemmy!" Henry calls from the door. But Philip puts his finger to his lips as Sara smiles into the camera and begins to sing "The Eentsy Weentsy Spider."

Every person in the room watches intently. Sara's mother mouths the words to herself; her father focuses the camera on her little fingers as they enact the motions. Her older sister pushes baby Josh in a gentle orbit away from the microphone. Her older brother stands guard at the door until she finishes. Sara smiles for the camera and holds out the hem of her skirt.

"Print it!" Jemmy announces and stands up stiffly to greet Henry with, "Well, what did you think?"

AT THE table, the housekeeper brings out chicken soup. The bowls for Sara and Josh contain bright pieces of carrot, green pepper, and sweet red pepper. "We'll go to any lengths," Angela tells Henry. "Sara is a terrible eater."

"She wasn't until Josh was born," Jemmy corrects cautiously. "When Josh was born she got a little j-e-a-l-o-u-s."

"It must feel very strange to be so much older than your brother and sister," Henry says to Philip and Nicole.

"It's a l-lot of fun," Nicole stammers amiably.

"They've been awfully good with the kids." Jemmy adjusts his round glasses. "Sara and Josh really have six parents with Philip, Nicole, the babysitter, the housekeeper, Angela, and myself. You're a happy girl, aren't you Sara? Are you a happy Sara? No. Not now. Sara, NO."

"Traveling has gotten really ridiculous," says

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Angela. "When I was nursing Sara I had to take my breast pump through security at every airport, and it kept setting off the alarm. They insisted on taking the whole thing apart every time, because the guards didn't understand what it was. And I'd have to repeat over and over: this is a breast pump. It is used for pumping milk from breasts. And then in Greece, when I was pregnant with Josh, my placenta started to unravel and I had to be rushed home, and Jemmy had his leg in a cast from the skiing in Gstaad, so he couldn't help much. The doctor ordered me to stay home in bed—you can imagine what that was like. I was stranded here up on the third floor. I couldn't go up or down stairs. That was when we installed the intercom system and the *furo*, the Japanese steam bath—you know, Jemmy, we've got to show him the top floors after dinner—so I was stuck up there, workaholic that I am. I planned my day around the flavor of ice cream I'd get Philip and Nicole to buy me when they got home from school. I blew up like a blimp. Must have gained forty pounds. Four, zero."

"Did the firm give you trouble about taking maternity leave?" Henry asks.

"Well, I'm a senior partner now, so we've solved some of those problems." Angela passes the fruit salad to Jemmy. The fruit is served in a hollowed pineapple cut lengthwise, so that half its prickly stem hangs over the edge of the platter. As Jemmy maneuvers nearsightedly, the stem topples a glass of red wine.

"Jemmy," moans Angela, and Philip and Nicole join in.

"I'm sorry," Jemmy tells the housekeeper as she swabs the table.

Sara squirms out of her highchair and dashes around the room holding her doll by the hair.

"When is her bedtime?" Henry asks hopefully.

"Whenever she decides to go to sleep," sighs Jemmy.

"We're sending her to the Newman Preschool," Angela says proudly. "That's where she learned the song. You know, they make such a fetish out of preschools now. It's incredible. They say that you have to send your kids to the Newman School because it's a feeder for Buckley Country Day, which is a feeder for Andover, which is a feeder for Harvard. But we just send Sara there because we think it's a good school."

"How's business in Oxford, Henry?" Jemmy asks.

"Marvelous. Simply marvelous. The store is doing brilliantly, and my little publishing company is losing less each year. Oxford is such a beautiful place. You really must visit." He looks at the children and adds, "Unfortunately I live in a microscopic flat. You know, I grew up in the city, but I'd forgotten how beastly it was. To venture onto the street for a taxi is to take one's life in one's hands. And the exploitation of it! I am almost afraid to talk to the drivers because they invariably have a Ph.D. in art history or Baltic Studies. Today I took a cab to visit my mother at the hospital and my driver was a petite Yemenite woman who was forced out of academia: simply driven out and forced to run a cab. I was very nearly moved to tears."

"How is your mother?" asks Angela.

"Impossible. Absolutely impossible. She'll outlive us all."

"I never have trouble g-getting a cab," Nicole puts in. "When they don't want to take me I just say, "I sup-pose you don't know who my father is. He's p-p-president of the Checker C-cab c-c-company of Manhattan. And it usually works. Some of the girls at my school haven't ever been outside Manhattan at all. They d-don't even know where Brooklyn is."

"They don't know what planet they're on," says Philip. And then in a completely different voice, to the baby, "But we like those mashed potatums, don't we Josh? Yes we do!"

Nicole struggles on, "That's why this week was c-c-career week and c-c-career women c-came to speak. I went to the banking seminar, and the woman banker t-talked to us about getting jobs. She said the most important thing to do at our age is to make sure to c-c-call for an interview ourselves, be-c-cause if your parents c-called the employer would get the wrong impression. She also t-t-taught us how to sit." Nicole demonstrates by straightening up, leaning forward slightly, and lifting her chin. She wears a string of pearls with her pin-striped blouse and parts her frizzy hair on the side. "Actually, I don't want to marry a b-businessman, I'd rather marry someone with b-b-billions of dollars."

"When I was your age," Henry tells Philip, "I used to escape to the library and just read and read. Jane Austen, E. M. Forster, Dickens—each of these writers was, to me, like discovering a new world. The language was so exquisite. I never had any ambition to write myself, only to read and study every intricate detail of those delicate plots, those characters and places, which seemed to me then, and still seem to me now, so much more subtle than those in the so-called real world of the 20th century."

"Yeah. Well I play squash," says Philip.

"He's ranked third nationally in his age group," Angela adds.

After dinner Philip carries Josh off to bed and Jemmy and Angela give Henry the tour of the house. The *furo* is black with a three-line phone built in. The second best part of the house is the third floor—devoted entirely to the children. Sara opens the door to her room, announcing, "*Please* enter."

"I'm afraid she's terribly spoiled. She's got every toy on the market," Jemmy says proudly. "And duplicates at the beach house in Amagansett." Sara's bed is covered with dolls and stuffed animals. Fisher-Price maps the floor with urban sprawl. Sara has every model: the house, the barn,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the garage, the castle, the store, the shopping center. She has taken all the little plastic cars from the garage and stacked them in the castle. The farm animals ride the elevator in the garage.

The tour continues past Nicole's room with its larger-than-life David Bowie poster and equally overscaled stereo, and they walk past Philip's tiny rectangular room with its built-in drawers under the bed and shelf of squash trophies over the bed. The largest room on the third floor is the playroom. Philip sinks into a huge beanbag and flicks a soccer match onto the VCR.

"What a beautiful computer!" exclaims Henry. The IBM is hooked up in its own wall system. "You must use your PC a great deal."

"No, not really," Philip yawns. "Just for games and term papers."

"I have to write a term p-p-paper on street life in ancient Rome," Nicole tells her mother.

"*Street* life?"

"Well, all the buildings were t-t-taken and the upper c-c-classes were already picked."

"And so you have to write a paper on street life? I don't like that. I don't like that at all. Jemmy," Angela turns to her husband, "Jemmy, I want you to phone that woman."

"Mrs. D-d-d. . . ."

"Yes, Mrs. Dalton. I want you to phone her tonight. I find her assignments offensive. In fact, I don't like her whole attitude. You might as well start by phoning the principal."

"I'll phone first thing in the morning, dear," Jemmy says. "We're taking Henry to the Young Dancers of America benefit."

Angela snorts. "I'll stay home and phone. There's no way I'm going to go watch a bunch of teen-age fairies prance around the stage."

"It's truly shocking," says Henry, "they've become so blatantly obvious."

SEAN stands in the open doorway of Cara's dressing room watching her make up. "Sean, you look so cool!" she breathes, catching sight of him in the mirror. He wears a blue wool kilt with a royal blue velvet blazer and a narrow tie. "This guy wore a kilt to our prom," Cara tells him, "and this other guy called him a faggot, so the guy with the kilt pulled a switchblade on him."

"Gosh," laughs Sean. "What did they do? Stop the prom?"

"No. It was great. We've got this really cool new headmaster who does everything by consensus, so we voted on how we wanted to respond. The thing was, the chaperones got to vote too. We outnumbered them, though. It was something like: 428 for the prom to go on, 23 to have a discussion about violence in the school system. Everyone got what they wanted. We got the prom, and the chaperones discussed violence with the headmaster."

Sean stares. "Why are you putting red circles on your cheeks?"

"Because I'm Coppélia and she's a doll. I've got to dance her in character."

"I took an acting course once," Sean says. "We all had to get down on the floor and pretend we were horses. Then we had to pretend one horse died, and we had to think how we as survivors would react. It was really crazy. We were all on our hands and knees trying to make sad horse noises."

"Floral arrangement for Miss Cara Novak," the delivery man calls through the door.

"Oh, wow! It's so huge!" Cara shouts as she takes the box. "It looks like a coffin!" She lifts out a dozen long-stemmed coral roses and reads the card aloud. "For Cara, from her fans."

"Who do you think sent it?" asks Sean.

"My parents, who else?"

They run to take the elevator up to the stage.

ADVISERS stand in each of the wings. They wear headphones and check their lists of entrances nervously. Sean and Cara try to see out on the stage and to the audience beyond, but the advisers block their view.

They slip back to the narrow passage behind the stage. The sounds of a brass ensemble drift back behind the curtain.

"I can't see your eyes," Sean tells Cara. Her lashes are thick with mascara.

"It's gross," she says matter-of-factly, "but you have to plaster your face so they can see you."

"That much?" asks Sean.

"You're not supposed to stand so close," she says impatiently. "It's for the cheapies in the back rows."

Sean puts his hands on her waist. "I'll teach you a German dance," he says. "Chasse right, two, three, left, two three, hop right, hop left, turn." She follows the steps twice through, then spins out on a turn and starts jitterbugging to the band music. They dance smoothly, careful of Cara's tutu and Sean's heavy shoes.

Someone calls Sean's name over the intercom. They look up and suddenly both see the dark shaft of the theater vault opening above them. They hold still, trembling with excitement.

"Sean!" Ms. Froelich calls desperately. She pushes him into the wings. "You've got five minutes. Do you want to sit down?" She offers him a stool.

"I'm fine!" Sean reassures her. A moment later he jumps out onto the stage.

He stands poised, center stage in the pool of light. Suddenly, bright piano music fills the darkness and he hops up, clicking his feet. He jumps forward and back, arms held straight down—and all the while his feet are dancing together without any help. Sean kicks up his legs and they fling themselves easily into the air. His tapping quickens with the music and he whirls around in the circle of light. As the music fades, Sean clicks and turns off the stage and comes back to bow, one leg pointed in front of his straight body.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You were so good!" Cara whispers in the wings, and he realizes the dance is over. An adviser gives Cara a push and now she is balanced in the light, her head turned slenderly.

"She has a pretty good figure for a ballerina," Jemmy tells Henry in the audience. "At least she has some kind of bust."

"But that Irish dancer was absolutely brilliant," Henry murmurs. "I do hope we see him at the reception."

"Actually," Jemmy confesses during the applause, "I can't stay after the show; I've got to give Philip a driving lesson tomorrow before squash practice."

AFTER the last curtain, the caterers roll white tables onto the stage. Still in costume, Brian sprays a champagne bottle over the dancers heading backstage for the showers. "Hey, to us," he toasts. "There better be towels down there!"

In the tangle of guests and plastic champagne glasses Henry sees Sean, out of costume now, his face still glowing.

"My name is Henry, and I must say I thought your dancing was just lovely. This Aran sweater is marvelous, it is so appropriate." He fingers the wool. "You simply cannot get wool like this in America. Was it imported?"

"Well, I don't know, but my mother knitted it, and she's American."

"What I simply cannot get over is the intricacy of a dance form that yet remains a kind of folk art."

"That's what I like about it too," Sean agrees. "My dancing is a new experience for so many people."

"How did you learn?"

"Watching my father. And when we had parties someone would yell: 'Give us some dancing, Sean!' So that's how I started. I still dance for them on tables and stuff, but I keep it low and easy unless I really warm up." Cara rushes by with her second glass of champagne. She has changed into an emerald green backless dress. "This summer I'm going to the Morris Dance Festival in Oxford, England," Sean continues.

"*Are* you? Bless your heart, that's lovely!" Henry puts his arm around Sean. "You see, I *live* in Oxford. It's absolutely the most beautiful place on the face of God's earth. Look, I'll give you my card, and if you need help finding a place to stay just ring me up. . . ."

"Sean!" Brian calls out from the other end of the room. "Get the hell over here if you want to be in the picture."

Sean hesitates, confused. "Oh, don't mind me," says Henry. "Here, just take the card and run along. I'll expect to hear from you soon."

Sean kneels next to Brian in the front row of the picture. The photographer is reloading his camera. "Who was that fag you were talking to?" Brian asks. "He was fuckin' weird."

AFTER the reception, Henry takes a cab back to the St. Moritz. His mind is alive with the young images of the evening. He imagines his own heavy body jumping and leaping, heels clicking high in the air. They're still serving dessert at Rumpelmayer's, bless their hearts. With a little hop, Henry pushes open the glass door. He sits at a pink table, half dazed by the pink and white light. A waitress passes carrying a glossy peach melba. It's just too much: this rich pastry wet with sweetness, this sweet ice cream, Sean's sweet open face. Sighing with happiness, Henry orders a piece of chocolate cake and a glass of milk.

IN THE chartered bus the dancers are delirious with their success. Brian runs down the aisle of the bus and chins on the luggage rack.

"Do that one more time, son, and I'll stop the bus," warns the driver.

Cara has smuggled a carafe of wine from the reception. She puts her roses in the red wine and tells the advisers the carafe is a vase.

"Cara, you're drunk," they scold.

She just laughs. Everyone is so funny. When she tilts her head back the bus veers strangely. The wine spills over the coral roses as she sips from the bottle through the stems. Her hair comes loose and falls over her shoulders.

"Have some." She offers Sean the carafe.

"Oh, I don't drink," he says fascinated.

"Just one sip," she giggles, holding the carafe to his lips.

He sips slowly. "Oh goodness, that went right to my head!" Cara tosses her hair back, laughing. "I think I feel a little tipsy," he tells her.

"That's good." She puts down the wine and settles onto Sean's lap. "Let's go swimming," she whispers.

"Where?" he asks stupidly.

"I don't have my bathing suit; what could I wear?" Cara wonders. She pauses to consider the question. "I'll have to wear my pajamas," she concludes seriously.

Sean pulls off his sweater. A white card falls from his pocket. *Tiki Sofer, Poet,* it says, *Hebrew and English, 370 Richmond Rd., Brooklyn, N.Y.*

"Brian was right," Sean whispers to Cara, "that fat man was weird."

She nods sleepily and closes her eyes. Sean wraps his sweater around her shoulders.

Brian chins on the luggage rack and sings out, "When you're a Jet you're the swingin'est thing. . . ." He chins on the rack again and the bus stops. Brian drops to the floor quickly. "I just thought of something," he says in a hushed voice. "When you get old, does your pubic hair turn gray?"

The bus is silent. Brian crosses the aisle unsteadily. "Shit," he says solemnly, "I never thought of that."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Curious Case of Marek Edelman

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

IN 1983, the Polish authorities, planning an official observance of the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, invited Marek Edelman to join the honorary sponsoring committee. Edelman, a member of the Jewish Socialist Bund since his youth, had been the Deputy Commandant in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The only one of his comrades, Bundists and Zionists, still remaining in Poland—for the last thirty years he has been a physician in Lodz—he had never joined the Communist party and never lent his name in support of the regime. Nor was he daunted, in 1983, by the government's effort to coopt him for its official observance. He rejected the invitation and distributed his statement as an open letter:

> Forty years ago we fought not only for our lives, but for life in dignity and freedom. To observe our anniversary here, where enslavement and humiliation are now the lot of the entire society, where words and gestures have become nothing but lies, would betray the spirit of our struggle. It would mean participating in something totally the opposite. It would be an act of cynicism and contempt.
>
> I shall not be a party to this, nor can I condone the participation of others, regardless of where they come from and whom they speak for.
>
> The true memory of the victims and heroes, of the eternal human striving for truth and freedom, will be preserved in the silence of graves and hearts—far from manipulated commemorations.

Thus did Edelman once again exhibit the defiant heroism that had distinguished his actions forty years earlier.

This was not the first interruption of the privacy of Edelman's life as a doctor. In 1976 the journalist Hanna Krall published in a Polish literary journal a series of interviews with him, focusing on his two lives—first as a young man in the Warsaw Ghetto where, under the German occupation, human life had no value, and later as a cardiologist dedicated to saving human life. Miss Krall's interviews appeared in book form in 1977, and the first edition of 10,000 copies sold out swiftly, as did a second edition of 30,000. The book catapulted Edelman into celebrity; more significantly, it reportedly sparked considerable interest among the younger generation of Polish readers and was said to have launched intense discussions, especially in dissident circles, about the need to improve understanding between Poles and Jews.

In its English translation, Hanna Krall's book* is unlikely to have the kind of impact it had in Poland. For one thing, its readers here, whether Jews or non-Jews, hardly need Miss Krall's instruction on the exemplary nature of the life-and-death struggle of Warsaw Jewry during World War II. Another obstacle is Miss Krall's style, which Timothy Garton Ash in his introduction to the English translation characterizes as a kind of "Polish New Journalism." By shuttling back and forth between chunks of transcribed conversations with Edelman and chunks of interviews with his heart patients, Miss Krall manages to create a maximum of confusion; it is not always clear who is speaking or when the conversation has taken place. As for Edelman, he talks as though in the privacy of his home, perhaps after a drink or two. Some of his remarks are smart-alecky; others leave themselves open to misinterpretation. Matters of importance are eclipsed by trivialities.

The matters of importance center on the harrowing deportation of Warsaw Jews to Treblinka in mid-1942, which Edelman witnessed at first hand while working as a messenger for the ghetto hospital. He had been assigned by the underground the task of rescuing, from among the tens of thousands assembled at the railroad siding to board the trains to Treblinka, as many as he could remove on the pretext that they had to be hospitalized. Another subject of importance concerns his comrades in the Bund underground and the desperate courage that motivated them to build their resistance organization. Edelman recounts how they fought their unequal battle with German SS and, finally, how he and members of his combat group managed to escape from the burning ghetto through sewer passages into "Aryan" Warsaw.

These subjects comprise a story of historical magnitude, but Miss Krall has reduced it to mere chatter. The chatterers themselves play a game of tag with memory, a commodity which in Poland seems to be even more elusive than it is in the West. (Perhaps remembrance has been outlawed there.) It is extraordinary, for instance, that neither Miss Krall nor Edelman ever mentions that Edelman himself wrote a short account of his ghetto experiences when the past

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ *is the author of, among other books,* The War Against the Jews 1933-1945, *which has recently appeared in a tenth-anniversary edition with a new introduction.*

* *Shielding the Flame: An Intimate Conversation with Dr. Marek Edelman, the Last Surviving Leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,* translated and with an afterword by Joanna Stasinska and Lawrence Weschler, Holt, 124 pp., $13.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was, as it were, still present. The Polish text of *The Ghetto Fights*—just about as long as Edelman's ghetto reminiscences here—was published by the Bund in Warsaw in 1945; an English translation appeared in New York a year later. It is precisely the same story that Edelman tells in this book, except that then he told it with greater coherence and dignity, and with a deeper appreciation of its historical import. But the pamphlet and the very remembrance of it have disappeared down Poland's memory hole.

Since Edelman wrote that account forty years ago, he has changed his view of the past in only one respect. He no longer believes that fighting was the only way to "die with honor," as he said in 1945 and as his comrades, Bundists and Zionists alike, used to assert in the familiar rhetoric of the Left. Edelman has come to the view that the millions of Jews who walked quietly into the trains taking them to Treblinka and Auschwitz were no less courageous, no less honorable, no less heroic than those who died wielding weapons and homemade Molotov cocktails.

Yet he cannot find appropriate words to express these thoughts. He comes across as tough, unsentimental, and crude. He speaks almost contemptuously of the resistance itself. Referring to the relatively small number of people—some 200—in the Jewish Combat Organization, Edelman asks: "Can you even call that an uprising?" Has he become a *Nestbeschmutzer*, befouling the nest he was raised in? Or is he just swaggering, heedless of the implications of his unthinking words? Emerson was right when he said that "every hero becomes a bore at last."

One of the hazards of oral history is that people do not always remember things quite the way they happened. That is why reminiscences need to be checked, corroborated by documents or other witnesses. Miss Krall's evidence of the past consists only of imperfect remembrance combined with hearsay, some of which is just plain wrong. For instance, she states that Henryk Grabowski, a Pole, was ordered by the Polish Scout movement to go from Warsaw to Vilna to "organize Jews for the struggle." This statement is as preposterous as it is false. Grabowski was a brave and good man, but never had such a task. He served as a liaison for some Jewish youth groups, because as a Pole he could move about more freely than Jewish couriers. He brought information from Vilna back to Warsaw and later helped a member of the Jewish Combat Organization in Warsaw.

Even more egregious are the two references in the book to the Communists as arms suppliers to the ghetto. Neither the Communist *Armia Ludowa*, nor the People's Army (mistranslated in the book as "Popular Army"), nor the Polish Workers party, the wartime version of the Polish Communist party, delivered any arms at all to the beleaguered Jewish ghetto fighters. Only the rightist *Armia Krajowa*—the Home Army, the resistance arm of the Polish government-in-exile—gave weapons to the Jewish Combat Organization. But they gave far too little and delivered much too late.

Amid the chatter of Miss Krall's book there are also silences. Nowhere does Edelman speak of his feelings toward Poland, or explain why he alone of all his comrades chose to remain there. Nowhere does he mention Polish anti-Semitism, except for an Aesopian reference to the anti-Semitic campaign which the regime launched in 1968, driving all but the last few thousand Jews and crypto-Jews from the country.

To be sure, when Miss Krall interviewed Edelman in 1976, government repression was the order of the day and journalists exercised caution in discussing politics and touchy issues like Polish anti-Semitism. But that was also the year when the first important dissident organization, KOR (Workers' Defense Committee), came into being. The rise of Solidarity in 1980 breathed fresh air into Poland's polluted political atmosphere and people began to speak out more freely. Edelman himself became one of Solidarity's ardent supporters. He was awarded an honorary membership in the organization, and in September 1981 he was elected a regional delegate to Solidarity's first—and only—annual congress in Gdansk. Even after Jaruzelski's military dictatorship crushed Solidarity and imposed martial law in December 1981, Polish dissidents continued to speak their minds and express their contempt for the regime. Edelman was arrested at that time, but was released after six days.

As his defiant statement of 1983 demonstrates, Edelman has not ceased to speak out—or to suffer the consequences (he was put under house arrest and police surveillance for his 1983 statement). In 1985 *Czas*, a Solidarity journal, published an interview with him in which he speaks with fierce honesty about his personal history as well as about Polish-Jewish relations.

In this interview Edelman describes his orphaned childhood. His father, of whom he can scarcely summon a memory, died when he was about four, his mother when he was twelve. It is his mother whom he remembers and to whose legacy he has remained faithful all his life. She gave him a secular and socialist Jewish upbringing and inducted him into the Bund. It is she to whom he owes his identity as a person and as a Jew.

As a youngster Edelman internalized the Bund's ideology and held fast to it the rest of his life. Bundist ideology, a combination of socialism and Diaspora Jewish nationalism of a militantly secular variety, was the source of his anti-Zionism and his fixed belief in the unviability of a Jewish state, a belief which even the reality of the forty-year existence of Israel has been unable to shake. Bundist ideology gave him his doctrinaire anti-clericalism, which he now vents evenhandedly against both Hasidism and the Catholic Church, though neither possesses the social or political authority it once exercised. In the Bund, too, he learned to hate Communism and the Soviet

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

system. Finally, through the Bund he made his covenant with the Jewish people, though after the murder of European Jewry the form of Jewishness to which the Bund committed him—secular Yiddish culture—came to an end. Edelman now believes, like Freud in his day, that being Jewish means identifying oneself with the opposition.

In the *Czas* interview, Edelman talks also of Polish anti-Semitism, especially before the war—the pogroms, the anti-Semitic political parties, the role of the Catholic Church in fomenting anti-Jewish prejudice. He describes his own experiences with anti-Semites before, during, and after the war. As he relates an incident involving anti-Semites in the *Armia Krajowa* who wanted to have him shot, he breaks off impatiently and says:

> Don't pay attention to my telling you such disgusting stories. They're not fit to print in any newspaper. Because as you know, the Poles are a tolerant people. Nothing bad ever happened here to national minorities, to religious groups. No. The Poles are an exceptional people. Casimir the Great took the Jews in, honored them, and loves them to this day. But that's enough. Why bother talking about it?*

WHY, then, if he feels this way, did Edelman stay in Poland? He has never explained, even to the *Czas* interviewer. Certainly he has never displayed any Polonist passion, not for the language of Poland, its culture, its history, or (especially) its politics. On the contrary, in the *Czas* interview he shows his loathing for the Polish anti-Semites he has encountered in every decade of his life.

Yet at each opportunity he had to leave, Edelman chose to stay. When the war ended, his closest friends in the Bund and in the Jewish Combat Organization decided to emigrate. Poland had become the graveyard of the Polish Jews, of the European Jews. Besides, the Poles, far from welcoming back the Jewish survivors, refused to restore Jewish property to its rightful owners. They even indulged in a few pogroms to make sure the Jews got the message. Some of Edelman's friends went to Palestine. Most went to the United States. They pleaded with him to join them. American Jews had papers for him and made him job offers. But he turned them all down.

He married a Jewish girl he had met after the Warsaw uprising of August 1944. Despite a deep depression, he began to study medicine, as did his wife. They had two children. Then his wife, convinced that Poland was no place for Jews, no place to raise her chidren, decided to leave. Once again Edelman stubbornly insisted on staying. She took their children and settled in Paris, where she still lives. The Edelmans are not divorced; whenever he is allowed to travel abroad, he visits his family in Paris.

What was it, then, that kept him in Poland, especially during those early years when he was constantly harassed by the police? Was it really the Bund's commitment to *do-ikeyt*, a Yiddish coinage denoting "hereness," the obligation of Jews to maintain their presence in the country where they were born and where they felt they belonged? This was something that Edelman's friends in the Bund had also once believed in. But after the war they realized it was no longer a viable ideal. They left Poland without feeling that they were betraying their Bundist principles.

In the *Czas* interview Edelman drops a clue to his anomalous behavior. The interviewer asks what made him the person he became. Edelman hedges, then says:

> Well, you must admit that every person has a particular upbringing. My mother thought, and brought me up to think, that things would be fine here, that all are equal, all are good, etc.

Here, I believe, is the morbid, perhaps even the macabre, reason Edelman has stayed behind in Poland, why he has relinquished the love and companionship of wife, children, friends. The key to the enigma resides not in a rigid adherence to ideology or political loyalty, but in the pathology of orphanhood, a disease from which he has never recovered. His tormented commitment to his mother and to her charge to him has kept him chained to Poland. She, the one person in the world he truly loved and the only person with whom he has retained an unbroken relationship, even long after her death, is the reason why Marek Edelman is the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in Poland.

ALL this, fascinating in itself, takes on an added twist of interest in the light of the current debate over Polish-Jewish relations, both historical and contemporary, that is now going on in Poland and the West. (See Ruth R. Wisse's article "Poland's Jewish Ghosts" in the January 1987 COMMENTARY.) Edelman, in his *Czas* interview, is certainly right in saying that the Poles do not like to hear about their anti-Semitism, and neither do their apologists. Norman Davies, for instance, a British professor of Polish history who is noted for his virtuosity in erasing Polish anti-Semitism from the history books he writes, asserts in a review of the Krall book (in the *New York Review of Books*, November 20, 1986) that Edelman "calls the Poles, among whom he has lived all his life, 'a tolerant people.'" Just for that sentence alone Davies could be sued for historical malpractice.

But this transformation of Edelman's bitter sarcasm on the Polish-Jewish question into benign praise for Polish tolerance is only one instance of how Davies has manipulated historical evidence over the years. His chief work, *God's Playground*, a two-volume history of Poland which, *faute de mieux*, is used widely as a college text, contains a chapter on the Polish Jews that is replete with errors, misconceptions, misrepresentations, and prejudices.

According to Davies, anti-Semitism in interwar Poland was an invention of the Zionists, who

* An English translation of the *Czas* interview appears in *Across Frontiers*, Winter 1986-87 (Berkeley, California), a quarterly devoted to East European matters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"sought to persuade the Jews to leave their homes in Poland," and therefore painted "Polish life in the most unfavorable colors." That is not quite the way it was. The Polish Jews did not need to be brainwashed by Zionist propaganda. They knew from the bitter experience of their own lives, day in, day out, that they were being starved, economically strangled, pressured to leave the country. They were excluded from whole areas of business and industry, discriminated against in higher education and the professions, subjected to physical violence and even pogroms. Their schools and religious and communal institutions were shortchanged by the government, which had reneged on the minority-rights treaty it had signed after the Versailles peace conference, obligating itself to respect the political and cultural rights of its minorities. Davies does not mention such unpleasant matters in *God's Playground*.

The farthest Davies is willing to go toward acknowledging the existence of Polish anti-Semitism is to suggest a kind of moral equivalence. "Polish hostility toward the Jews," he writes, is "complemented by Jewish hostility toward the Poles." He does not, unfortunately, offer any convincing examples of such equivalence (maybe a pogrom perpetrated by the Orthodox Agudah, or an instance of Hasidim picketing Polish stores?). Instead, on the Polish side he proceeds to assert repeatedly that there was good reason to dislike the Jews, who, being Communists, "did much to launch the popular stereotype of the *Zydokomuna*"—the "Jew-Communist."

DAVIES's piece in the *New York Review* offers a sampling of the same prejudices that abound in his book. Here, to discredit the "Zionists" who created the "myth" of Polish anti-Semitism, Davies uses Edelman and the Bund as his foils. According to him, the "most noble element" in the makeup of the Bund was "its staunch opposition to nationalism." This he writes of a movement defined, as we have seen, by its commitment, precisely, to its own form of Jewish nationalism! Bundists believed that Jews would continue to live collectively as Jews, even in a socialist society, enjoying autonomy in their internal affairs—schools, communal services, and cultural activities, all of which would be conducted in Yiddish, which Bundists regarded as the Jewish national language. Even in its earliest days, when the Bund was an autonomous party within the Russian Social Democratic Labor party, it was recognized as a nationalist party, and was so denounced by Bolsheviks like Plekhanov, who used to quip that Bundists were "Zionists who were afraid of seasickness."

In interwar Poland, the Bund put up the most aggressive defense among the Jewish parties against Polish anti-Semitism and in behalf of Jewish interests. At election time, it deployed its party militia to guard voting places and battle the anti-Semitic hoodlums who terrorized Jews to prevent them from exercising their right to vote.

Besides getting the Bund all wrong, Davies peppers his review with anti-Semitic tidbits which his editors at the *New York Review* astonishingly left undisturbed. Thus, he compares the Betar (Zionist-Revisionist) youth movement with the viciously anti-Semitic prewar Polish party ONR, which patterned itself on the Nazi party. He refers to American professors of Jewish studies as "professors of anti-Semitic studies, whose courses proliferate on American campuses"; apparently he thinks of Jewish professors as an academic franchise of the Elders of Zion.

This last notion may, incidentally, lurk behind a legal controversy between Davies and Stanford University. It seems that Davies had applied for an opening in East European history, but the Stanford department turned him down on the plentifully sufficient grounds that his scholarship did not meet their professional standards. Davies has since filed suit against individual professors in that department, and has widely bruited it about that "Zionist cells" in Stanford were responsible for his rejection.

This is the man who has attached himself to Marek Edelman on the ludicrously mistaken assumption that Edelman is something of a Polish patriot—a point about which Davies is as wrong as he has been about everything else in the history of the Polish Jews. The whole episode serves only to remind us that the proper reconstruction of that history is as treacherous—and urgent—a task as any now facing us.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Libel & the Media

RECKLESS DISREGARD: WESTMORELAND V. CBS ET AL., SHARON V. TIME. By RENATA ADLER. *Knopf. 243 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by JAMES Q. WILSON

IN TWO articles published last year in the *New Yorker*, Renata Adler leveled a stinging attack on the press and the lawyers who defend the press. The Columbia Broadcasting System, in her view, libeled General William Westmoreland in a CBS News 90-minute documentary (*The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*) by falsely claiming that he had been part of a "conspiracy" to "suppress and alter critical intelligence" on the enemy in Vietnam (specifically, by undercounting the size of enemy forces operating in the south). *Time* magazine defamed Israeli General Ariel Sharon by claiming that he had "discussed with the Gemayels" (a ruling Lebanese family) "the need for the Phalangists to take revenge for the assassination of Bashir" (a Gemayel family leader), thereby encouraging the Phalangists to conduct a massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila.

Moreover, when called to task by Westmoreland and Sharon, both media giants denied all wrongdoing, went (in Miss Adler's view) to great lengths to conceal the results of their own internal investigations of the matters (investigations that apparently raised serious doubts as to the accuracy of both stories), and employed lawyers who waged a root-and-branch defense of the press and a vigorous assault on Westmoreland and Sharon.

Miss Adler's articles became a *cause célèbre*, leading to attacks on her by various lawyers and journalists who accused her of making errors of her own. Long letters criticizing the magazine pieces were sent by CBS and *Time* to the *New Yorker* and to other publications. As if matters were not already complicated enough, Miss Adler was herself pursuing a libel suit against various media, including the company that happened to own both the *New Yorker*, where her articles appeared, and Alfred A. Knopf, which published the book version.

The book contains the magazine articles together with a coda in which Miss Adler takes up some of the criticisms made by CBS and *Time*, offers her rebuttal, and extends and elaborates on her criticism of the trial conduct of the lawyers and witnesses for these corporations.

It is not an easy book to read. It is written in a style so convoluted as at times to defy comprehension. One sentence runs on for nearly two pages; other sentences meander through the potholes of so many parenthetical expressions as to make it nearly impossible to follow the trail of the argument; virtually every sentence is peppered with enough commas to make the prose read like a series of hiccups. The narrative skips back and forth between the two trials, leaving the reader to puzzle out what is happening, unaided by chapter titles, a table of contents, or an index.

But the book does convey, quite convincingly, certain major themes. First, Generals Westmoreland and Sharon were badly treated. In the Sharon case, the jury found that *Time* magazine had published false and defamatory statements about General Sharon and that certain *Time* employees, particularly correspondent David Halevy, had acted "negligently and carelessly in reporting and verifying the information which ultimately found its way into the published paragraph of interest in the case." As part of a settlement before an Israeli court, *Time* admitted that there was no evidence of any discussion of revenge between Sharon and the Phalangists.

There was no jury finding in the CBS trial because, on the advice of his lawyer, General Westmoreland dropped the case. It was widely argued in the press at the time that Westmoreland had discontinued his suit because the testimony was running against him. From reading those press accounts I believed that theory. Miss Adler leads me to think that I may have been wrong. Her review of the evidence leaves little doubt that the CBS documentary produced by George Crile was slanted, incomplete, and tendentious, and that the bulk of the testimony adduced in depositions and at the trial fully supported General Westmoreland's claim that he had not manipulated U.S. estimates of North Vietnamese troop strength.

Crile based the CBS program on the arguments of a former CIA analyst, Sam Adams, whom CBS paid as a consultant and then filmed (after extensive coaching) as an interviewee. Witnesses in a position to know the truth and who later denied the CBS version were not shown on the program. These included former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, former National Security Adviser Walt Rostow, and retired General Philip Davidson, former chief of intelligence to General Westmoreland. The two officers who were the chief military witnesses for CBS, and whose testimony was widely interpreted as being so damaging to General Westmoreland, did not in fact acquit themselves well on cross-examination, providing little or no direct evidence of any cover-up or intelligence manipulation. No brief summary can convey the significance of Miss Adler's review; interested readers will have to plow from page 77 through 132 of the book. If they do, I believe they will find there a compelling account of key defense testimony slowly disintegrating.

As against her account, based almost entirely on the written transcript, there is the testimony of other reporters at the trial (who seemed to think Westmoreland had

JAMES Q. WILSON *is Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard and Collins Professor of Management at UCLA. His most recent book, written with Richard Herrnstein, is* Crime and Human Nature.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a weak case) and a poll of the jurors that reportedly indicated they were leaning toward CBS. Of course, they had not yet heard all the testimony or any of the closing arguments.

THOUGH the generals were defamed, they apparently were not libeled, and thus even General Sharon could obtain no remedy. The standard that the Sharon jury was instructed to apply (and that the Westmoreland jury would have been instructed to apply) was enunciated by a unanimous Supreme Court in the 1961 case of *New York Times Co.* v. *Sullivan*. State libel laws, the Court held, are governed by the First Amendment protection of free speech and press, especially where public officials are involved. To ensure that debate on public policy is robust, one must allow it to be vehement and even caustic. A statement about an official may be false and damaging, but the official cannot obtain a judgment unless he can show that the statement was made with "actual malice"—that is, "with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not."

Not long after the New York *Times* rule was announced, the Court began extending its protection to persons who, though not public officials, were "public figures." But who is a public figure? The Court has backed and filled on this, holding, at various times, that an army general, a real-estate developer, a party to a labor dispute, and a candidate for the state legislature were public figures but that a big-time college football coach, an attorney in a newsworthy law suit, a wealthy woman in a publicized divorce case, a political adviser to former Vice President Spiro Agnew, and the founders of the La Costa resort in California were not public figures.

The Supreme Court managed to accomplish with respect to libel law what it has done with regard to the law defining obscenity and governing police searches—make it so complex, confusing, and changeable that hardly anyone, least of all a jury, is likely to understand it without deep study. In the Sharon case, the judge dutifully inducted the jurors into the mysteries of libel law and gave them some forms on which to record their answers to the key questions. As we have seen, they answered the first two questions—was the *Time* story defamatory? was it false?—in the affirmative. But they could not say that "clear and convincing evidence" supported the conclusion that the false and defamatory part of the story was published with "actual malice."

This is the core of the legal issue raised by the case. Should a person, such as General Sharon, have no remedy against false and defamatory statements unless he is able to prove, clearly and convincingly, something about the mental state of the reporter (it was filled with actual malice) or about the procedures followed in producing the story (they displayed a reckless disregard for finding the truth)? No other democratic nation erects so formidable a barrier to libel suits as does the United States with the New York *Times* rule. No other nation requires the plaintiff to investigate the mental state and reportorial procedures of the media and in so doing to assume the burden of proof. In England, for example, the media must prove the truth of the defamatory statement; here, the plaintiff must prove its falsity. Of course, just because the U.S. has a unique policy does not make it a wrong policy, but it does make one wonder whether there might be a better way.

One consequence of the special rules limiting the claims of public officials and public figures is that a libel trial, as in these cases, can be incredibly expensive. To establish whether or not a statement is false and defamatory is one thing; to establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that somebody harbored actual malice is many times more difficult. As a result, a public official who brings such a case must seek large damages in compensa-

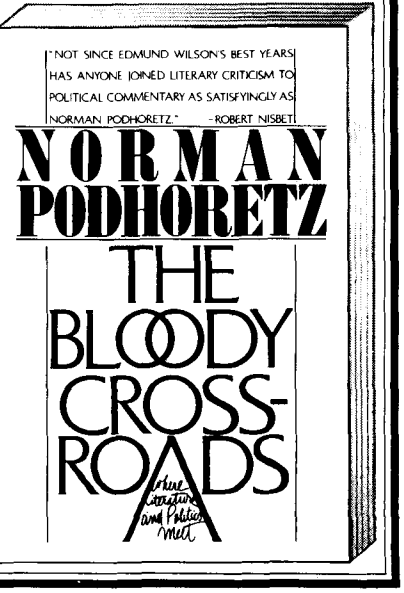
"A magnificent book...

There is no literary critic writing today who pursues that enterprise more impressively....Podhoretz's critical writing is exhilarating."
—*National Review*

A scintillating collection of essays that critically evaluates 20th-century literature's preoccupation with Communism, illuminating the literary and cultural dimensions of the struggle between totalitarianism and the democratic West.

"Not since Edmund Wilson's best years has anyone joined literary criticism with political commentary as satisfyingly as Norman Podhoretz."
—*Robert Nisbet*

Now in paperback


"NOT SINCE EDMUND WILSON'S BEST YEARS HAS ANYONE JOINED LITERARY CRITICISM TO POLITICAL COMMENTARY AS SATISFYINGLY AS NORMAN PODHORETZ." —ROBERT NISBET
NORMAN PODHORETZ
THE BLOODY CROSS-ROADS
Where Literature and Politics Meet

TOUCHSTONE
TOUCHSTONE PAPERBACKS
Simon & Schuster, Inc.
A Gulf+Western Company

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion not only for the injury he has suffered but the expense he has incurred. (Much of the legal costs of the two generals was borne by private donations of money and time. But not many public figures are likely to attract such contributions.) As the financial stakes rise, the tendency of the media to admit nothing and mount a vigorous counterattack rises. The richest media have the biggest resources with which to fight back, and so the most pervasive and influential media—the television networks and the national news magazines—are best equipped to get away with defamation (both CBS and *Time* were represented by Cravath, Swain & Moore). And the richest and most powerful medium, network television, is also that form of communication most widely used and trusted by the American people.

But the costly and bewildering world of libel law does not simply empower the rich. It also lures almost everybody with a chip on his shoulder. Other people, including at least one journalist, who took offense at Miss Adler's characterization of them have threatened to sue her. She may have to face a libel trial for what she published about another libel trial in a magazine owned by a firm she was suing for libel.

WHAT IS going on here? Despite the restrictions on public figures' winning, such suits, or threats of suits, abound. Libel law seems to be proceeding down the same slippery slope as product-liability law —when in doubt, sue; sue the deepest pockets first; get some absurd award that will then be reduced on appeal; and above all keep the lawyers prosperous. America, it has been said, has an adversarial political culture. That has its benefits (we are acutely conscious of our rights) but it also has its costs (we are all enemies to one another).

One could imagine making changes in our libel law which, while maintaining a free and vigorous press, would reduce the incentive to go for big-bucks awards and at the same time give public figures some reasonable defense for their reputation. One possibility is to modify the New York *Times* rule so that "actual malice" need not be shown. An alternative standard would simply be truth or falsity, with the burden on the plaintiff to prove falsity. The jury would be asked to decide whether a statement was false and defamatory, not what was in the mind of the reporter who wrote it.

But this standard might leave the press vulnerable to ruinous damages for what were innocent errors. (In the original New York *Times* case, the defamatory statement was an advertisement criticizing how the Montgomery, Alabama police department treated blacks. It contained minor factual errors, but Alabama juries awarded damages of $500,000 to the police commissioner and $500,000 to another commissioner; other officials brought suits totaling $5.6 million.) To guard against this, one could limit the damages that might be recovered or provide alternative remedies.

For example, proof of defamation might lead to the mandatory publication of a retraction, together with the recovery of legal fees. In addition, as Steven Brill has suggested, the offending medium could be required to pay (if a newspaper) a sum equal to three times the cost of a full-page ad or (if a broadcaster) three times the cost of a two-minute commercial. That system of what I call "space fines" would scale the monetary damages to the size and profitability of the medium—the New York *Times* might be out $60,000, but the East Overshoe *Gazette* would be out only $600. The plaintiff could pocket the money or use it to run some ads.

One can imagine other possibilities. But on these matters Miss Adler's book is largely silent: she raises the legal issue but does not discuss any alternative standards or remedies. In various places she seems to deplore the existing state of the law, but in her coda, she makes no recommendations for change—and she does so for manifest ideological reasons: "With the composition of the new Court . . . , the likelihood is that any change in *Sullivan* [as the New York *Times* case is also known] would be only, and radically, for the worse."

Come, now. We are not supposed to discuss the law for fear Chief Justice Rehnquist will take our advice? If the Court moves libel law in the wrong direction (and I see no indication it is likely to do so), it will not be because we writers have kept our thoughts secret. Indeed, the full discussion of alternatives is the best possible way to reduce the likelihood of bad decisions. Moreover, the question of remedies can be addressed to some degree by legislation.

THE central thrust of Miss Adler's book is not, in fact, the law of libel at all; it is the responsibility of the press and the extent to which it has, in her view, defaulted on that responsibility. This nation once was served by a press that with few exceptions was partisan and unscrupulous. Some nations are still so served. Here and today, however, we have embraced the view that news is different from opinion and that the major news-reporting organizations have an obligation to be as fair and careful as the exigencies of daily or weekly publication permit.

It is easy to see how *Time* might have erred. It had a story. It believed it was true. Given the confusion surrounding events in the Lebanese refugee camps, the secrecy of the Israeli investigation into the massacre, and the difficulty of being certain whether a reporter on the scene had actually and reliably confirmed his story, it was understandable that a story later shown to be false might have been printed. What is hard to understand or forgive is the decision of *Time* to "stand by its story" in the face of mounting evidence—ultimately, evidence deemed wholly persuasive by a federal jury and confirmed by the highest levels of the Israeli government—that David Halevy could not produce factual support for the damaging report. Most people would hope, and Miss Adler expects, *Time* to say something like this: "We will check into it, we will give a full public account of what we have learned, we will retract the story and issue an apology if we find we cannot substantiate it." It did not.

It is much harder to justify CBS News going forward with the Crile

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

documentary. There was no daily or weekly or even monthly deadline to meet; the events alleged to have happened had happened years earlier. There need not even have been such a documentary. There was plenty of time to check and double-check the facts and to ensure that all sides were adequately interviewed. How can the same organization that tries to do a good job with its nightly news program do so poor a job with this documentary? As Miss Adler describes it:

> The CBS defendants were not "press" at all; they took a thesis; found witnesses more or less to support it; interviewed those witnesses; and cut those parts of the interviews which did not support the thesis; found the arch-villain, according to the thesis (and cut to those moments when he looked angry, shifty, ill at ease) . . . rehearsed and re-interviewed some friendly witnesses; found reasons not to interview other witnesses, who had information that would undermine the thesis; composed a script for Mike Wallace, in his adversarial style, to grill some witnesses and coddle others. In short, they were acting not as press but as producers and directors casting for a piece of theater; and that theater was a court.

Unlike *Time*, CBS did conduct an elaborate and independent investigation of the case, the so-called Benjamin Report. Nevertheless CBS News, like *Time*, still said that it "stands by the broadcast."

Time, like many news magazines, has a fairly elaborate procedure to check on the accuracy of materials before they are published. Because of these procedures, it had earlier placed David Halevy, the Sharon reporter, on probation for poor journalistic work in reporting the health problems of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. (The reporting of the Begin case bore a striking resemblance to the reporting of the Sharon case: Halevy's reliance on unconfirmed and unidentified "sources.") Some other publications, notably the New York *Times*, regularly publish a "Corrections" column. CBS News may have similar rules and do equivalent checking for its regular news reports, but it does not seem to do much checking when a "special" such as the Vietnam documentary is produced.

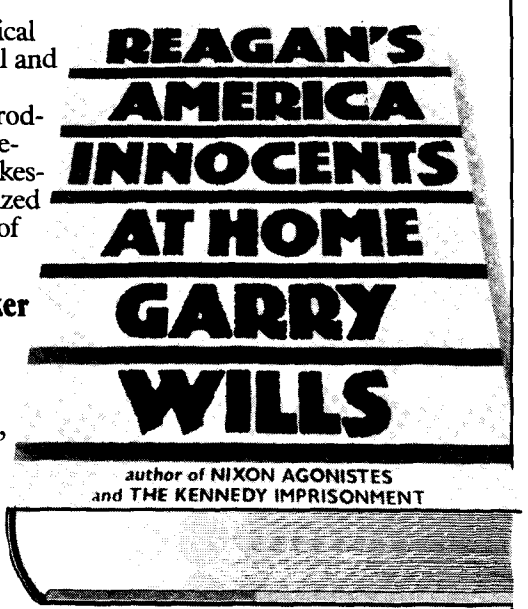
Miss Adler wants the press to do better without the prod of a tougher libel law. "Older than the First Amendment's safeguards of freedom of speech and of the press," she writes, "was Western civilization's interest in the Ninth Commandment." But she does not offer, save by exhortation, any advice as to where incentives might be found to deter the media from bearing false witness. The present law of libel makes public officials pretty much fair game except where the journalistic misconduct is egregious. Public opinion is not much of a constraint: television news has grown in popularity, especially among younger people. CBS's *60 Minutes* is one of the most popular programs on television. George Crile, producer of the Westmoreland documentary, is now a producer for *60 Minutes*. (Nothing succeeds like failure.) In public-opinion polls, *Time* is rated as more believable than the Associated Press—a popular misperception that would be funny if it were not so tragic. The AP traditionally has not run stories based on unnamed sources—it prints what it can get "on the record." *Time* lives and breathes by its ability to get "unnamed sources" to spill whatever they think are the beans.

Journalists are only rarely a visible, public check on other journalists. In a true profession, such as medicine or physics, fellow professionals keep each other reasonably honest by publicly criticizing unsupported theories or bad data. Journalism is not in this sense a profession—its members rarely criticize one another, except when they denounce cautious journalists for not attacking "The Establishment" more vigorously. There was some journalistic criticism of the Westmoreland documentary by Hodding Carter and in a book by Don Kowet, *Matter of Honor*. The latter was denounced by other writers as some right-wing plot against "investigative reporting." Otherwise, the journalistic mood was to rally 'round the First Amendment.

"For efforts to find Mr. Reagan's 'place in history,' this book will be indispensable." —C. Vann Woodward, front page, *New York Times Book Review*

"One of our foremost political writers offers a thoughtful and provocative portrait of a national archetype—the product of a professional image-making machine, the spokesman for a vanished, idealized America, and the mirror of a past that never was.

"Garry Wills is a thinker of the first rank. He combines the vigor of the social critic with the depth of the historian, and to these he adds the even rarer gifts of the philosopher." —*New Republic*



DOUBLEDAY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would be a mistake to make too much of the libel problem. The great bulk of the reporting on public officials is well within the bounds of reasonable comment. Without much doubt, the media are far more restrained today, when their immunity from libel suits by public officials is relatively high, than they were fifty years ago when such suits were much easier to sustain. The New York *Times* rule has not unleashed a torrent of defamation. But at the same time, we expect more of the media today than formerly. Fifty or seventy-five years ago, we expected the Hearst and Pulitzer papers to engage in a lot of mud-slinging and partisan advocacy. Television news did not exist.

Today, as revealed by polls, the American people want to believe in the media, especially television. And the media have responded by doing more "investigative reporting." The press asks tougher questions and defers less to government handouts. But in the search for the "inside story," many reporters have lost sight of what the public needs —the inside story reported with balance on the basis of dependable sources confirmed by other sources. George Crile and David Halevy did not meet that test, and in their frantic—and often profitable—search for bigger audiences and better scoops, their employers did not seem to care.

Christian, Muslim, Jew

THE JEW AS ALLY OF THE MUSLIM: MEDIEVAL ROOTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM. By ALLAN HARRIS CUTLER and HELEN ELMQUIST CUTLER. *University of Notre Dame Press. 577 pp. $50.00.*

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

As the title of this study suggests, Allan and Helen Cutler believe that the tendency of medieval Christians to see the Jew as an ally of the Muslim was the decisive factor in the development of anti-Semitism. In making this case, the Cutlers take on conventional wisdom, which holds that anti-Semitism originated in the charge of deicide (that Jews killed Jesus) and in the Jews' anomalous socioeconomic status in Europe. Although the Cutlers' study is poorly written and far too lengthy, it offers an intriguing and even compelling argument.

The logic of their case can be reduced to a syllogism: (1) medieval Christians feared and hated Muslims; (2) medieval Christians saw Jews as the allies of Muslims; (3) therefore, medieval Christians feared and hated Jews.

On the first point, the Cutlers are correct to note the presence of a pervasive fear of Muslims among medieval Christians. That fear began with the emergence of Islam and lasted until the 19th century. In 634, just two years after Muhammad the Prophet's death, for example, the patriarch of Jerusalem referred to the Muslims as "the slime of the godless Saracens [which] threatens slaughter and destruction." This early view was later echoed many times over; for centuries, the role of arch-enemy, in myth and literature, was filled by Muslims.

This is understandable, for Muslims, who inhabited a belt of territories extending from Morocco to Egypt to Turkey to Siberia, physically surrounded medieval Christendom. Muslims were also the most constant enemy: with only one exception (the Mongols), every serious military threat against Christian Europe after the 10th century was launched by them. The Muslim danger continued to preoccupy the Christians of Europe for more than a millennium, until after the second siege of Vienna in 1683.

Muslims also differed from the other invaders—Germans, Bulgars, and Hungarians—in presenting a religious and cultural danger as well as a military one. Hungarians would eventually accept European culture and convert to Christianity, but Muslims brought with them a rival civilization which not only withstood Christianity but even seduced Christians from their faith. For all these reasons, Muslims were the outstanding enemy of Christendom.

Second—and this is the heart of the Cutlers' study—Jews were seen as close associates of Muslims. There was some justice to this view: the Hebrew language shares much with Arabic, and Judaism shares much with Islam; on the most abstract level, both are religions of law, while Christianity is a religion of faith. More specifically, they share many features such as circumcision, dietary regulations, and similar sexual codes. Further, because the Muslims were preeminent in the medieval centuries, "Jews themselves associated Jew with Muslim." When this became known to the Christians, it much harmed the Jews' position. Most significant of all, Jews on occasion helped Muslim troops against Christians (as in the initial Arab conquest of Spain) and some Jews held prominent positions in Muslim governments at war with the Christians. Even when they did not actually take part in the fighting, "Jews usually rejoiced when Christian territory fell into Islamic hands."

The Cutlers marshal a variety of textual and pictorial proof to make their case that medieval Christians saw a deep connection between Jew and Muslim. To take one of each: an influential 12th-century Christian text includes the bizarre statement that "A Jew is not a Jew until he converts to Islam," and a woodcut in a book of religious disputation published in 1508 pictures a Jewish figure carrying a banner with the name "Machometus" (Muhammad) together with a Muslim figure carrying a banner that depicts a Jew's hat.

Third, Christian fear of Muslims affected the view of Jews. To prove this thesis, the Cutlers must show that Christian anti-Semitism varied roughly according to the state of Christian-Muslim relations: the status of Jews declined as Christian animosity toward Muslims increased, and, conversely, Jews were better off when wars against Muslims ceased. The authors do establish this point in a broad-brush sort of way, more by assertion than through a close look at the record. They argue that far fewer anti-

DANIEL PIPES, *the author of* In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power, *is director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and editor of its quarterly journal,* Orbis.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Semitic outbreaks occurred in Europe in 700-1000, when Muslims were still a distant concern, than in 1000-1300, when they had become the objects of intense hostility. The Cutlers date the transition to about 1010, when rumors spread through France that the Jews had helped the Fatimid rulers of Egypt destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. In retaliation, the Jews of Orleans were made to pay with their lives.

WHEN viewed in the context of the age, the Muslim role in medieval anti-Semitism is not surprising, for Muslims had a profound impact on diverse aspects of medieval European civilization. Indeed, little took place in Christendom between the 8th and 15th centuries that was not influenced by the Muslims. For instance, the Muslims achieved victory in battle through the use of stirrups which enabled them to control and maneuver their horses; the Christians were compelled to imitate them, and this led to an emphasis on fighters on horseback, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the feudal social order. Muslim domination of the Mediterranean cut off southern Europe from its traditional trading partners, leading to increased cultivation of northern Europe. The Muslim intellectuals of Spain, by bringing Greek philosophy into Europe, contributed importantly to the Renaissance. Modern European imperialism originated in the Crusades against the Muslim "infidels," while Portuguese and Spanish naval discoveries were stimulated by the desire to circumvent the Muslims. Ottoman threats diverted the Catholic states and inadvertently facilitated the rise of Protestantism.

Muslims also affected smaller developments: the Mafia began as an anti-Muslim league, the Vatican was built to withstand Muslim attacks, and the Acropolis was ruined in the course of its use as an arsenal by Ottoman forces. Muslim influence pervaded the diet, clothing, and art of many Christian cultures.

This list could be extended much further; the key point is that Muslims touched on myriad aspects of the Christian civilization of Europe. As the historian R.W. Southern has observed, "The existence of Islam [was] the most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom. It was a problem at every level of existence." In this light, it is hardly surprising that the Muslims also affected the way Christians viewed Jews.

THE authors strongly believe that medieval Christian perceptions remain a force today, that the notion of Jewish-Muslim alliance still fuels anti-Semitism. They even go so far as to argue that "Israeli antagonism toward Arabs may in part be affected by a Jewish desire (perhaps more subconscious than conscious) to disprove the historic Christian belief that the Jews are in league with the Muslims against the West." Christian anti-Semitism, in this reading, will endure so long as Christian anti-Muslimism remains potent. To combat anti-Semitism, the Cutlers therefore propose that "American and world Jewry should be ready and willing to put much more of its community-relations time, money, energy, and imagination into urging Christians and Muslims to enter into genuine dialogue and reconciliation."

This is a radical new approach; but does it hold? In my view, the Cutlers' analysis of the medieval situation adds a new dimension to our comprehension of the way Christian-Jewish relations developed. And indeed, insofar as Christian anti-Semitism does owe something historically to the Muslim-Jewish relation, to that extent it may be a more transient phenomenon (over, admittedly, the very long run) than is sometimes supposed. To put it another way, the less we see the charge of deicide as the one and only historic core of the Christian persecution of Jews, the more clearly we may envisage an abatement of anti-Semitism.

Still, I am very skeptical about the applicability of the Cutlers' in-

"A masterful wealth of beauty and sorrow, looking back through a crack in time."
KIRKUS REVIEWS

S·E·A C·H·A·N·G·E·S

S·E·A C·H·A·N·G·E·S

by ROBERT KOTLOWITZ

In Frankfurt in the late Thirties, a bourgeois German-Jewish family sends their teenaged son off to safety in America.

"*Sea Changes* is about two forms of adjustment; to the realities of a new country and to the yearnings of adolescence . . . a tale Kotlowitz tells with sympathy, compassion, and a wonderfully observant eye."
WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

"Always thought-provoking and intelligent . . . a considerable achievement." NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Available at your local bookstore

North Point Press, 850 Talbot Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94706

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sight to current circumstances. The reason is obvious: since World War I, conflict, not alliance, has dominated relations between Muslims and Jews. Indeed, the Arab-Israel dispute has so overwhelmed earlier bonds between Muslims and Jews, such as they were, that the latter have virtually disappeared from view in the West. This change means that the old association of Muslims and Jews no longer holds.

Take the case of the Arabs' success in raising the price of oil in the 1970's. During the 1973 Arab-Israel war, the Arabs emphasized their use of oil as a weapon against Israel. Each side then tried very hard to put the onus of blame for the price increases on the other. Under these conditions, it hardly seems likely that the Christian West would see Muslims and Jews as allies. To the contrary, the two parties have acquired a reputation of being even more hostile enemies than they in fact are. Only scholars recall the ties between them in centuries past.

Further, in a terrible twist of fate, Muslims have themselves become in recent years the leading international patrons of a Christian-style anti-Semitism. To take just one example among many, the Defense Minister of Syria, Mustafa Tlas, has recently published a book titled *The Matzah of Zion* in which he dredges up the classic accusation of blood libel. Tlas has adopted a blatant anti-Semitism of the sort that no prominent figure in the Christian West would still accept publicly. The notion of Muslim-Jewish alliance in the face of such Muslim anti-Semitism is preposterous.

The Jew as Ally of the Muslim is a peculiar book. The second chapter is an arcane page-by-page commentary on a recent scholarly book. The final chapter suggests that the Pope should "transform his office and mission from a more narrowly Christian into a broadly Abrahamic one . . . to create a new spiritual and institutional unity between Jews, Christians, and Muslims." But these shortcomings are compensated for by the fact that the Cutlers have a suggestive new idea, which is now available for others to build upon.

From Lenin to Gorbachev

UTOPIA IN POWER: THE HISTORY OF THE SOVIET UNION FROM 1917 TO THE PRESENT. By MIKHAIL HELLER and ALEKSANDR M. NEKRICH. Translated by PHYLLIS B. CARLOW. *Summit. 880 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by MAURICE FRIEDBERG

THIS magisterial volume, a collaborative effort by two émigré Soviet scholars now residing in Western Europe, may well become, as its subtitle inadvertently claims, *the* history of the USSR for many years to come. Only one of its authors, Aleksandr M. Nekrich, was an internationally-known historian while still in the USSR. His *June 22, 1941*, published in 1965, provoked a storm of controversy because of its candid thesis that the initial Soviet defeats in the war were largely the result of Stalin's criminal negligence. Mikhail Heller, though also trained as a historian, is best known for a number of literary studies published since his arrival in Paris in 1969. Heller's and Nekrich's interests complement each other, and the resulting study, which draws on a vast variety of Soviet, Western, dissident, and émigré sources, is further enriched by an imaginative use of literary materials which impart much color and immediacy to the dry bones of archival and documentary data.

Nekrich and Heller deal at length with just about every major issue in the history of Russia in the 20th century, and on those issues which are still controversial among historians they take refreshingly forthright stands. One such issue has to do with the ideological kinship of Communism and Nazism, as well as the infamous history of their collaboration. About this the two authors write:

> A good pupil of Lenin and Stalin, Hitler pointed out that the bourgeoisie's weakness in relation to revolutionary Marxism stemmed primarily from a separation between spirit and force, between ideology and terror. In Marxism, said the Führer, "spirit and brute force are harmoniously blended." He added, "National Socialism is what Marxism could have become, if it had broken its absurd ties with the democratic order." Lenin was the first to discover the secret of blending "spirit and brute force," the practical use of force to carry out a utopian program, and the use of a utopian program as a camouflage for brute force.

In order to accomplish this, Nekrich and Heller continue, "the first thing [Lenin] did was to strip words of their meaning." Following, as it were, the dictum in *Alice in Wonderland*, and long before George Orwell's Newspeak, "He would give them meanings depending on the need of the moment and modify them depending on the audience." Presumably, such differentiation extended also to Lenin's addresses to the country's starving population and his words to the arch-capitalist Herbert Hoover, whose American Relief Administration fed in 1922 no fewer than seven million Soviet citizens, the first—though by no means the last—instance of the West's bailing out the USSR from possible collapse.

More importantly, this differentiation was scrupulously observed—as it still is, to this day—in what the authors call the bi-level character of Soviet foreign policy. Conventional diplomacy is pursued by the Soviet Union on a government-to-government level. Simultaneously, campaigns of subversion and "wars of liberation" are waged by Communist parties and their subsidiaries to advance a revolutionary cause that is quite openly identified with the Soviet state. Foreign diplomats attend formal receptions of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while representatives of terrorist activity who are engaged in wars aimed at overthrowing the diplomats' governments attend congresses of the Soviet Communist party as "fraternal delegates" and honored guests.

On another controversial question, Heller and Nekrich are categorical in their insistence that, Trotsky and other dissident leftists notwithstanding, Stalin is to be re-

MAURICE FRIEDBERG *is head of the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois, Urbana.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

garded as Lenin's true and rightful heir:

> Stalin did not make himself general secretary. Lenin did. Lenin had been his mentor, protector, and constant model. . . . The question whether Lenin was the legitimate or illegitimate son of Plekhanov and Marx continues to stir debate among philosophers, historians, and specialists in family law, but the question of whether Stalin was Lenin's son is disputed less and less. Stalin was not only his legitimate heir but his only one.

As for Trotsky, the two Russian émigré scholars reject the idealization of him that has been for some decades fashionable in certain leftist circles of Western Europe, discerning little difference between him and his victorious rival.

In their discussion of the roots of World War II, Heller and Nekrich not only emphasize Nazi-Communist affinities but also advance the intriguing hypothesis that Stalin had actually *feared* a Communist victory in Germany, which would have transformed Russia (in Zinoviev's quotation from Lenin) into a "backward Soviet country among developed Soviet countries." That never came to pass. Indeed, Russia narrowly escaped becoming one of Europe's more backward Nazi colonies, although one feature of Nazi ideology, its state-sponsored anti-Semitism, continues to flourish in a modified shape on Soviet soil nearly half a century after Nazism's collapse.

The one Soviet leader whom Nekrich and Heller view on the whole positively is Nikita Khrushchev:

> Whatever the reason, it fell to Khrushchev's lot to carry out the truly great mission (it is no exaggeration to call it that) of exposing the crimes of the Stalin regime, that is, of the Soviet system, freeing millions of prisoners from the camps, and posthumously rehabilitating millions of others. The return of non-Russian populations of the Northern Caucasus who had been exiled to Siberia and Central Asia during the war is also to Khrushchev's credit. Under Khrushchev, anti-labor legislation was abolished (although not

"The African National Congress
Is not like a chapter of CORE,
Since strategy's modeled in Moscow
And leads to occasional gore.
But, fearful of 'after apartheid,'
We're giving them different strokes;
Besides, any omelet worth eating
Means breaking a couple of yolks."

For a free copy of the current issue of National Review write to Dept C-13. 150 East 35th Street New York, N.Y. 10016

"Offers more truth and understanding of humanity in one page than many of today's [bestsellers] provide in 500."—*Kansas City Star*

A SPECIAL DESTINY

By SEYMOUR EPSTEIN

author of LEAH and PILLAR OF SALT

At all bookstores

DONALD I. FINE, INC.

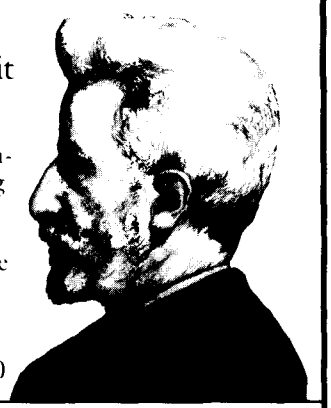
JEWISH THOUGHT AND SCHOLARSHIP FROM

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary

A Translation and Psychological Portrait

By Raphael Patai



The early diary of Ignaz Goldziher, founder of Islamology, provides a psychological portrait of the young savant at age twenty-three. Along with the journal, written between 1873 and 1874, Raphael Patai's detailed introduction and annotations create a profile of a genius who earned recognition and admiration throughout the scholarly world.

160 pages

ISBN 0-8143-1842-8 $22.50

The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim

A Reader

Edited and Introduced by Michael Morgan
Selected in Collaboration with Emil Fackenheim

In this authorized anthology, Michael Morgan, one of the most knowledgeable and articulate Fackenheim exponents, has made a careful selection of Fackenheim's important Jewish writings, from an early unpublished essay of 1938 to his current work.

560 pages

ISBN 0-8143-1820-7 cloth, $39.95
ISBN 0-8143-1821-5 paper, $15.95

Medieval Jewish Seals from Europe

By Daniel M. Friedenberg

Based on an exhaustive survey of European archives, libraries, and museums, Friedenberg's volume is the first comprehensive study of the use of seals by Jews from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. In all, 177 seals are catalogued in this stunning, extensively illustrated reference book.

500 pages, illustrated, 7 X 10, with slipcase

ISBN 0-8143-1769-3 $57.50

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Leonard N. Simons Building
5959 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48202
(313) 577-4604

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

entirely, since the work books were maintained), the tax burden was lightened, the social-security system was improved, the construction of housing was expanded, and obligatory loans to the state were dropped.

Now, after the moderately repressive two decades of Brezhnev's rule, and the brief interregnums of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, a young and activist Mikhail Gorbachev is trying to come to grips with a multitude of economic and social problems, ranging from economic stagnation to alcoholism. Some of these may be the result of ineptness and neglect and may well prove at least partly amenable to reform. Others, however, are clearly systemic in nature and are rooted in cardinal principles of the Communist creed that are unlikely to be revised.

In sum, the balance sheet of Soviet history, as Heller and Nekrich see it, is—major successes in foreign policy aside—quite discouraging:

> The second greatest industrial power in the world, as it is often called, is unable to feed its population or maintain a system of foreign trade comparable to that of prerevolutionary Russia: it exports mainly raw materials and imports industrial equipment. Instead of moving toward the proclaimed goal of constructing a classless society, the Soviet state has given birth to an extremely hierarchical caste system. This multinational empire, ruled from Moscow, has not resolved any of the nationality problems in the USSR itself or in the "fraternal" countries. The changing demographic balance could only complicate and aggravate national conflicts.

The prognosis for international peace is equally dim:

> The Soviet leaders are congenitally hostile to the West and reject its right to exist in its present form. They need the West as an object of hatred, however, as potential prey, and, at the same time, as the only source of aid in overcoming chronic "temporary" difficulties. Marx's concept of the interdependence between the base and the superstructure has found strange application in the socialist utopia, which builds its superstructure partly on a base outside of itself, in the West.

THIS brings us to the underlying historical thesis of *Utopia in Power*. Throughout their analysis, Nekrich and Heller unabashedly defend the proposition that the USSR and its institutions, far from being extensions of those of imperial Russia, represent a radical break with the Russian past. At the very start they write: "On the date of October 25, 1917, under the old Russian calendar (November 7 by the Western calendar), a new era began. The history of Russia ended on that day. It was replaced by the history of the Soviet Union." Indeed, Nekrich and Heller have nothing but scorn for Western historians intent on "demonstrating that from the time of the Scythians Russia was inexorably heading toward the October revolution and Soviet power. It was inherent in the national character of the Russian people. Nowhere else, these scholars think, would such a thing be possible."

Some seven hundred pages later the reasons for the two authors' insistence on the radical discontinuity between Russian and Soviet history becomes more understandable. To them, what happened to Russia could happen anywhere—anywhere, that is, a totalitarian revolution occurs or is imposed from without. What is more, it *has* happened elsewhere:

> Regardless of historical traditions, geography, or national character, each country where a Soviet-style socialist system was installed produced identical results. . . . All the socialist countries resemble one another in having only one political party, which runs everything and is responsible to no one, a police network that penetrates every fiber of the social fabric, and a low standard of living. The Soviet Union, the heart of the socialist system, is also its model. The countries which join or are embraced by the Soviet bloc imitate the Soviet model perfectly, just as every human fetus in the mother's womb repeats the biological evolution of the human race.

To Nekrich and Heller, then, if the Soviet Union is a radically different organism from imperial Russia, its history is nevertheless paradigmatic, a terrible model for would-be enslavers and a terrible object lesson for any who would avoid enslavement.

THERE have been only two or three important full-length histories of the Soviet Union published in our time (the number of histories of Russia that extend through the Soviet regime is of course considerably greater). Whatever objections or qualifications may be raised to this one, it is a work with which all future historians will have to contend, and against which they will inevitably be measured.

Divided Souls

A CONFLICT OF VISIONS: IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES. By THOMAS SOWELL. *Morrow. 273 pp. $15.95.*

Reviewed by LARRY D. NACHMAN

IN AUGUST 1762, Msgr. Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, issued a condemnation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*. Though clearly no intellectual peer of the greatest mind of the French Enlightenment, Msgr. Beaumont had behind him the imposing tradition of Catholic theology, and that tradition enabled him to get quickly to the heart of the revolutionary theory which Rousseau, at the height of his career, was presenting to the world.

What Msgr. Beaumont's attention was directed to was Rousseau's contention that "The first stirrings of nature are always right; there is no original depravity in the human heart." This proposition not only contradicted Christian doctrine, but appeared to Msgr. Beaumont to be a false simplification of the nature of man. "There resides in us," he wrote,

> a striking mixture of grandeur

LARRY D. NACHMAN, *who teaches political science at the College of Staten Island, is completing a book on psychoanalysis and social theory.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> and meanness, of love of truth and a taste for error, an inclination toward virtue and a tendency toward vice.

For Msgr. Beaumont, as for all Christians, the truth about man was that he possessed a dual nature.

Yet although the Archbishop understood that Rousseau's theory contradicted Christian doctrine, he did not grasp its full meaning. For Rousseau, too, was setting forth a theory of man's duality. There was a "natural" man who was inherently good and an "artificial" man, the product of social institutions with their evil workings. Rousseau's intention, in his own words, was to take "men such as they are, and the laws such as they can be." The moral nature of man could be changed, he wrote, by a revision of the social institutions which produced and shaped him.

The conflict between Rousseau and Msgr. Beaumont thus concerned the question of whether the source of evil and of human suffering was to be found in the permanent features of human nature or in the character of social institutions, and whether the injuries which men inflict upon one another can best be dealt with on an individual basis, soul by soul, or collectively, through the transformation of society. This same division over fundamentals, over matters abstract and seemingly remote from practical affairs, has in one way or another informed much of the political thinking and debate of the modern era. And it is about those fundamentals that Thomas Sowell has written in his fine book, *A Conflict of Visions*.

Sowell, a leading representative of the Chicago school of economics, is one of the foremost social scientists in America today. A brilliant analyst who obviously takes delight in his polemical skills, he established his reputation in a series of economic and sociological studies of ethnicity in America marked not only by high scholarship and intelligence but by an even rarer quality, common sense. It was Sowell, for instance, who pointed out that standard interpretations of data on the differential incomes of various ethnic groups are marred by the failure to factor in the different median ages of the groups under study; any true comparison of the earnings of Jews and Hispanics, say, has to take into account the fact that the median age of the former group is that of a middle-aged man, the latter that of an adolescent.

A Conflict of Visions is a departure from Sowell's earlier, highly empirical studies. It is a reflective book in which he tries to discover the underlying "visions" of man and society that, he believes, have generated the principal opposing political theories of the last two centuries. Such visions are, he claims, "the silent shapers of our thoughts," and "the foundations on which theories are built."

The conflict of visions which is the subject of Sowell's inquiry turns on two "basic conceptions of the nature of man" which have contended with each other since the 18th century. He calls them the constrained and the unconstrained visions, and he defines them in the following manner:

> The constrained vision takes human nature as given, and sees social outcomes as a function of (1) the incentives presented to individuals and (2) the conditions under which they interact in response to those incentives. . . .
>
> In the unconstrained vision, human nature itself is a variable, and in fact the central variable to be changed.

By and large, the constrained vision is held by conservatives and the unconstrained vision by liberals and socialists. In short, we are back to the argument between Archbishop Beaumont and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In *A Conflict of Visions*, Sowell examines an impressive array of economic, political, and legal thinkers from Adam Smith and William Godwin in the 18th century to such contemporaries as John Rawls and Friedrich Hayek. Throughout, he employs his categories of constrained and unconstrained visions as a principle of intelligibility, placing and clarifying the theories that underlie the ongoing debate about the proper policies to advocate and pursue in society and government. As Sowell shows, those who believe in the malleability of human nature will, as Rousseau did, hold society responsible for all human suffering and will therefore seek to transform society according to their vision of human perfection, normally by extending the power of government.

By contrast, those who have a constrained vision of the human condition deny our capacity to reconstruct the human world according to our desires, believing that the best we can do is to check or redirect the inherently selfish impulses which are man's permanent legacy; in their view, the power of government is a suspect instrument to this end.

Sowell is careful in this book not to take sides as between the two views of the role of government power; rather, he wants to trace the ways in which the debate turns on the larger question of how amenable to change is the nature of man. But he leaves unexamined the possibility that the two traditions are not altogether mutually exclusive.

Thus, it is universally accepted that if the basis of human life is biological ("nature"), no conscious and purposive efforts can change substantially the conditions of human existence; if, on the other hand, man is a product of his social environment ("nurture"), we can and should intervene to provide ourselves with a radically different and better mode of life. The debate, as Sowell describes it, is over which of these propositions is true. Yet neither proposition is so self-evidently true as to deserve the kind of exclusive allegiance each is seen to enjoy.

We intervene persistently and successfully, for instance, to alter some elements of ourselves that are part of our biological destiny. This activity is well-expressed in Freud's line, "Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God." If our prostheses, born of our cunning and our technological skill, do not change our nature, they frequently change the consequences of that nature. We are warm without fur, we fly without wings, and the re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

straints of our laws, when they are enforced, prevent us from acting on our worst impulses.

Similarly, even if human character can be formed by social institutions, it does not necessarily follow that we have or can acquire the capacity to mold man according to our vision of what he should be. The practical possibilities for realizing Rousseau's hopes and expectations *seemed* to be confirmed by the massive social transformations brought about by the French Revolution and its successors; the relative ease with which long-standing institutions disappeared and new ones were conjured up seemed to testify to man's ability to alter at will the foundations of his existence. No wonder few now doubt our capacity to change our social environment and thus transform human nature.

BUT perhaps we overestimate our powers. Recently I attended a welcoming ceremony for the dissident Soviet physicist and "prisoner of conscience" Yuri Orlov, newly arrived on our shores. In a brief address he spoke, oddly enough, not about politics but about the search for meaning and purpose in life. His accent, literally and figuratively, was that of a character in a 19th-century Russian novel, and his explicit references to Tolstoy left no doubt about the basis of his world view. Where, I wondered, was evidence of the "new man" whom Lenin and Stalin had set about to create in the Soviet Union? In the case of Orlov, that which had persisted through change was not so much universal human nature as the effects of a culture which was itself the result of a long historical process. Somehow, seventy years of concentrated, venomous zeal in uprooting traditional forms of life could not erase a characteristic mode of looking at the world and man's place in it.

An example is not a proof, but it can be suggestive. We are inclined always to think about social change; we pay insufficient attention to social stability. Although we make large claims about the power of culture and social institutions to shape human character, we overlook the signs of their capacity to maintain and preserve patterns of life despite our efforts to change them. The preservation of distinctive patterns of ethnicity in America is one significant demonstration of the endurance of such social patterns.

As I have noted, Sowell does not permit his general political position to intrude upon his analysis of the theoretical and policy differences which follow from the constrained and the unconstrained visions. He is, of course, a leading exponent of the constrained vision; one would not know it from a reading of this book. But if Sowell's conservatism does not enter into the book, his empiricism sometimes does. Even his readiness to accept the proposition that the whole debate between the two visions is a conflict over the plasticity of human nature seems to reflect a belief that this great and fundamental controversy could be resolved by the right empirical study, as if the whole raging conflict underlying modern politics might turn on a fact. Thus he states:

> The crucial issue is ultimately not what specifically is desired (a question of value premises) but what in fact can be achieved (a factual and cause-effect question).

And he adds:

> It is precisely the correctness or incorrectness of particular beliefs about social causation that requires scrutiny—a scrutiny arbitrarily barred by the phrase "value premises."

Sowell is suggesting that if the fundamental basis of ideological conflict is over values, then there can be no rational discussion or determination of the political issues which divide mankind; that is why he calls for "scrutiny" of "particular beliefs" on the basis of their empirically ascertainable "correctness or incorrectness."

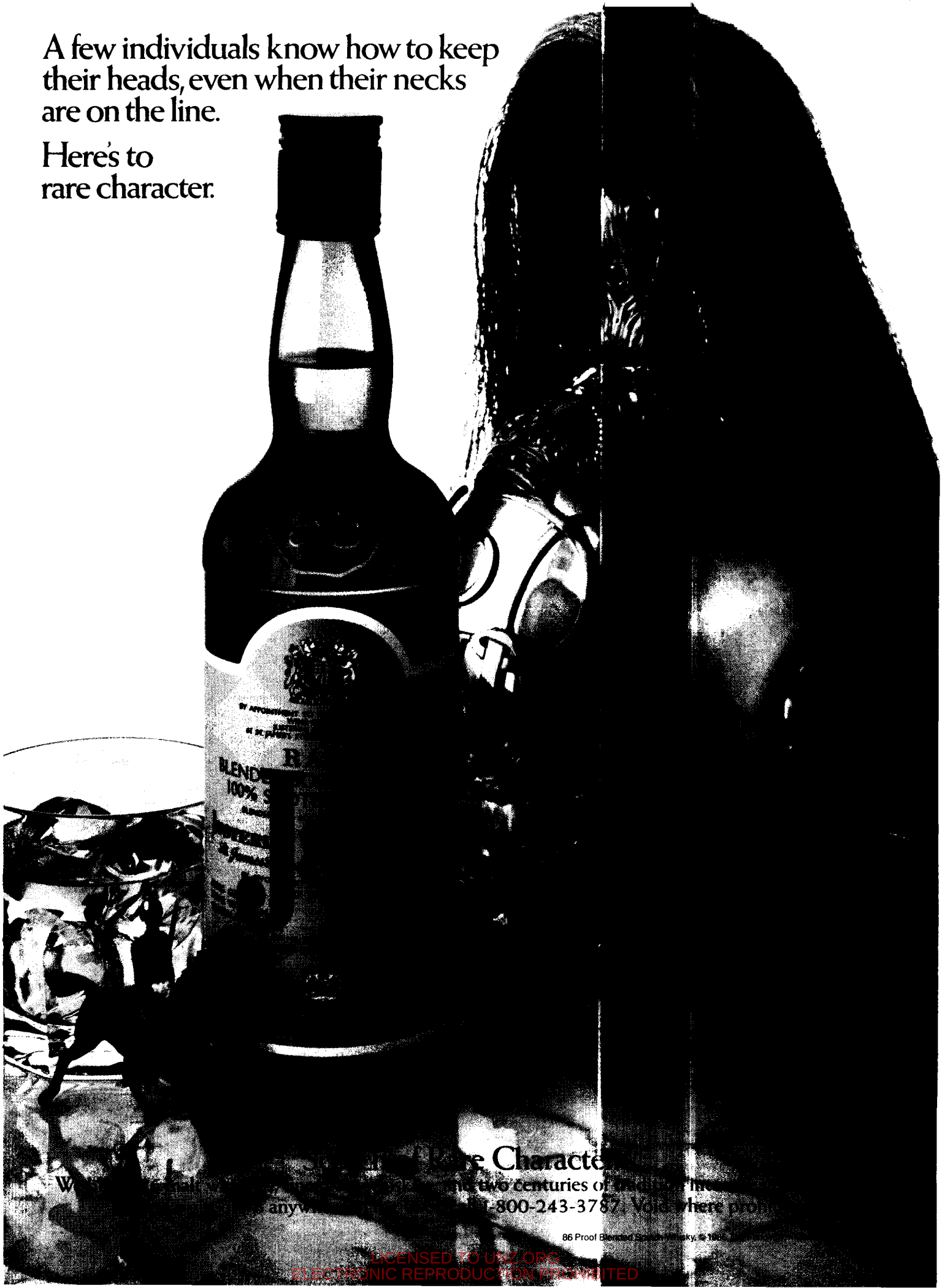
But Sowell himself has shown how such "scrutiny" is not barred even when the issue is one of a moral or political value. For instance, one important point made in this book is that in judging political action, those who share the constrained vision tend to place primary importance on processes rather than results. Sowell shows that these processes, these forms which are so important to conservatives, involve the substance of political freedom and political democracy, which are moral and political values if there ever were any. But he also demonstrates that adherence to these processes may involve the acceptance of a status quo in which some or many suffer deprivation. Throughout *A Conflict of Visions*, Sowell subjects to similarly close scrutiny the meanings and implications of other such "value premises."

Sowell believes, finally, that "an analysis of the implications of visions can clarify issues without reducing dedication to one's own vision." I am not so sure. This clarification of values, this rational scrutiny, could, if not reduce dedication to one's own vision, at least make one understand that no political position embraces all good, and therefore that one's political opponents are not necessarily malevolent. Sowell's illuminating guide to the political conflicts of our age teaches the valuable lesson that political choices always involve costs. In a complex world, it is virtually impossible to act for good without doing some harm. In politics, where choices involve the security, welfare, and fortune of millions, it is thus not enough to console oneself with the thought that one has tried one's best to minimize the harm; one should think, judge, and act politically in a cold sweat.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A few individuals know how to keep their heads, even when their necks are on the line.

Here's to rare character.



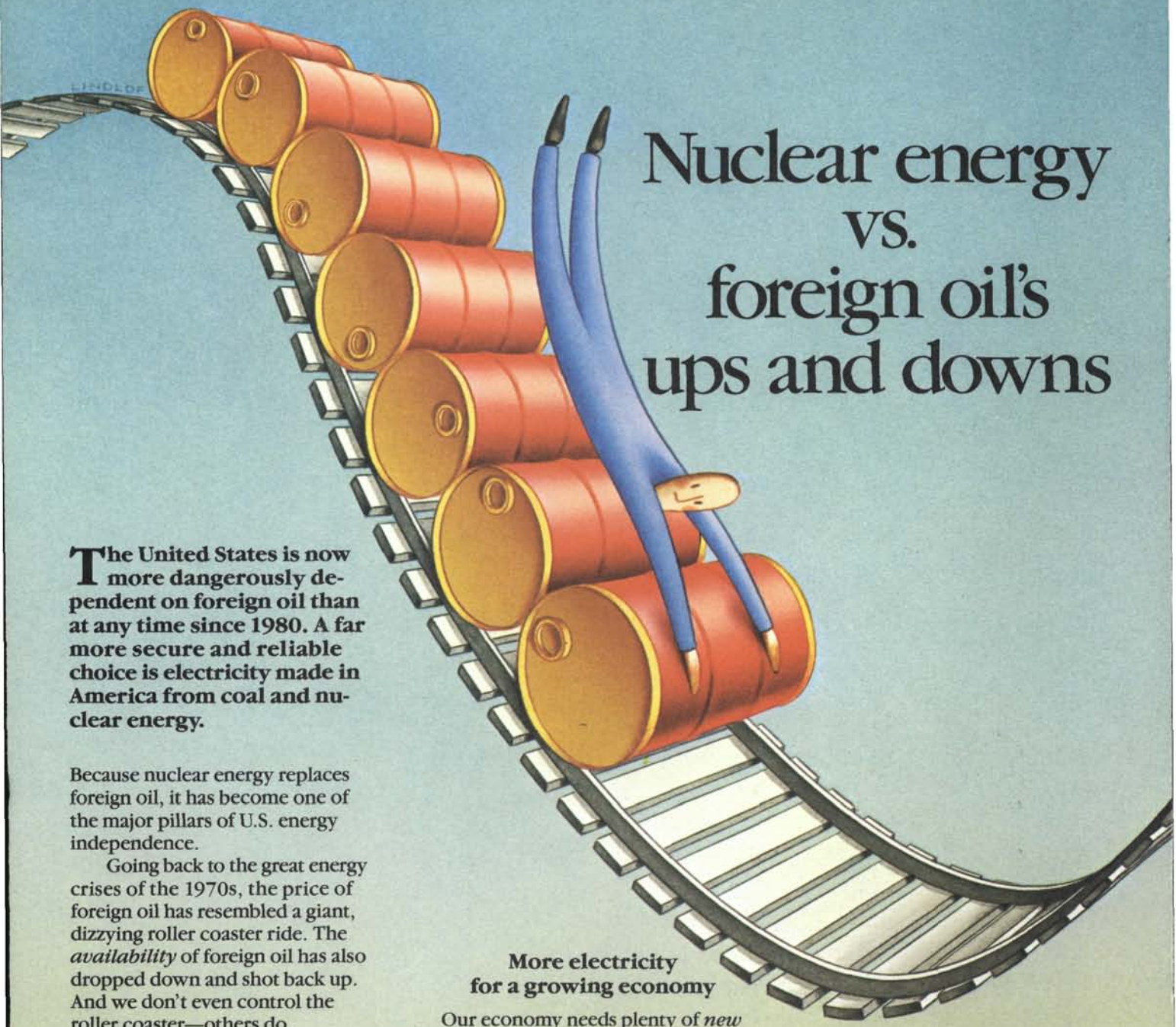
Rare Character

...and two centuries of ...

...anyw... ...1-800-243-3787. Void where prohi...

86 Proof Blended ... Whisky. © 19...

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Nuclear energy vs. foreign oil's ups and downs

The United States is now more dangerously dependent on foreign oil than at any time since 1980. A far more secure and reliable choice is electricity made in America from coal and nuclear energy.

Because nuclear energy replaces foreign oil, it has become one of the major pillars of U.S. energy independence.

Going back to the great energy crises of the 1970s, the price of foreign oil has resembled a giant, dizzying roller coaster ride. The *availability* of foreign oil has also dropped down and shot back up. And we don't even control the roller coaster—others do.

Consider this ominous statistic: even though prices were low in 1986, America still had to pay about $30 billion for foreign oil. That's a lot of dollars leaving this country, adding to an already huge trade deficit.

Nuclear energy cuts oil imports

Clearly, the more energy we use in the form of electricity from coal and nuclear energy, the less oil we have to import.

Nuclear-generated electricity has already saved America over two billion barrels of oil, with billions more to be saved before the turn of the century. That's why it's so important for our energy self-reliance.

©USCEA, 1987.

More electricity for a growing economy

Our economy needs plenty of *new* electrical energy to keep on growing. Almost all of that new energy is coming from coal and nuclear electric plants.

The truth is that nuclear energy is an everyday fact of life in the U.S. It's been generating electricity here for nearly 30 years. Throughout the country are more than 100 nuclear plants, and they are our second largest source of electric power. As our economy grows, we'll need more of those plants to avoid even more dependence on foreign oil.

Safe energy for a secure future

Most important, nuclear energy is a safe, clean way to generate electricity. U.S. nuclear plants have a whole series of multiple backup safety systems to prevent accidents. Plus superthick containment buildings designed to protect the public even if something goes wrong. (It's a "Safety in Depth" system.)

The simple fact is this: America's energy independence depends in part on America's nuclear energy.

For more information, write the U.S. Committee for Energy Awareness, P.O. Box 1537 (RC29), Ridgely, MD 21681. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Information about energy America can count on

U.S. COMMITTEE FOR ENERGY AWARENESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED